

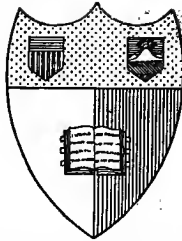
THÉRÈSE

RAQUIN

A REALISTIC NOVEL

ÉMILE ZOLA

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MADAME RAQUIN'S EFFORT TO DENOUNCE THE MURDERERS
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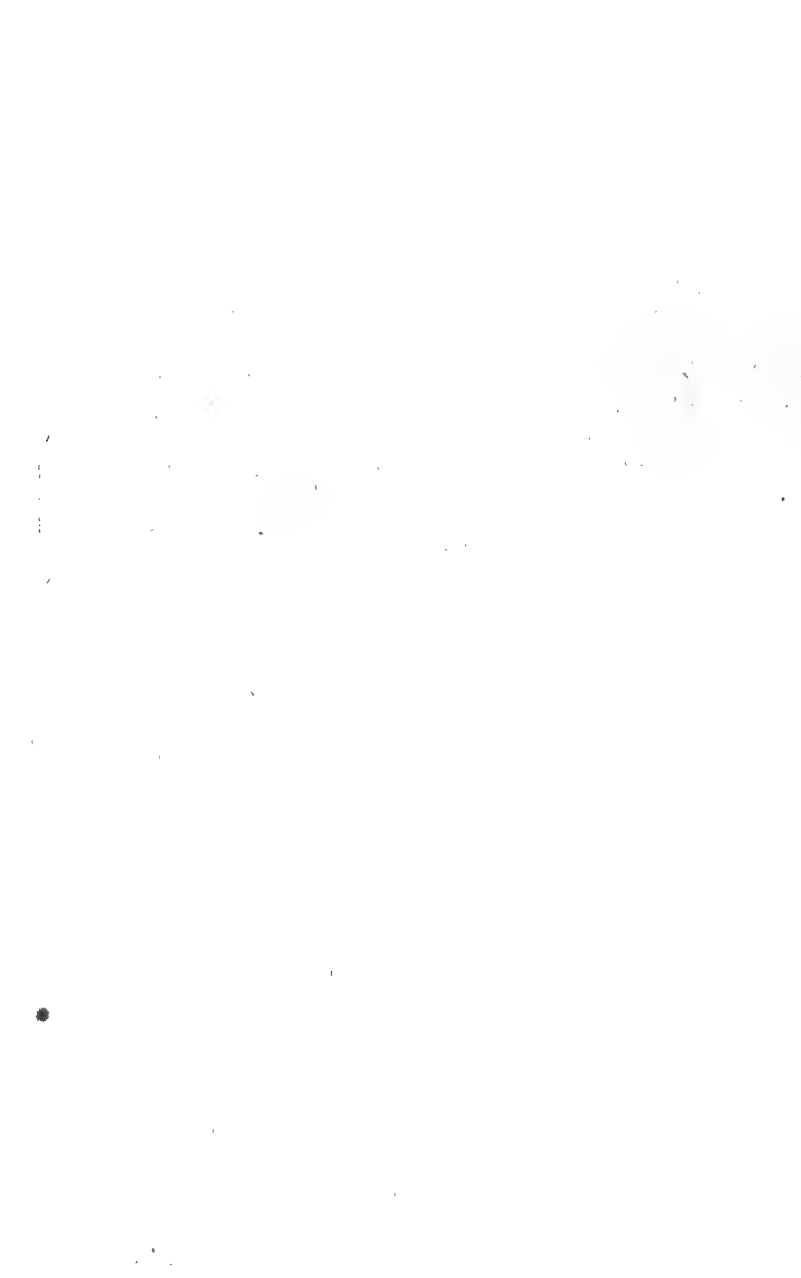
THÉRÈSE RAQUIN.



LAURENT THROWING CAMILLE INTO THE RIVER.

p. 84.

BY ÉMILE ZOLA.



THÉRÈSE RAQUIN:

A REALISTIC NOVEL.

BY

ÉMILE ZOLA.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND FRENCH EDITION.

I HAD imagined in my simplicity that this novel might do without a preface. Being in the habit of saying aloud exactly what I think, of laying stress even upon the slightest details of what I write, I had hoped to have been understood and judged without any preliminary explanation. It appears that I was mistaken.

Criticism has received this book with a brutal and indignant outcry. Certain virtuous individuals, in newspapers equally virtuous, have made a grimace of disgust as they took it up with the tongs to pitch it into the fire. The little literary sheets themselves, those little sheets which chronicle every evening the news of alcoves and private supper-rooms at restaurants, have put their handkerchiefs to their noses and talked of filth and foul smells. I in nowise complain of this reception; on the contrary, I am charmed to observe that my brother journalists possess the sensitive nerves of young girls. It is quite evident that my work belongs to my judges, and that they may consider it a nauseous production without my having a right to protest. What I do complain of is that not one of the chaste journalists, who blushed on reading "Thérèse Raquin," appears to me to have understood this novel. If they had understood

it, perhaps they would have blushed still more, but I should at least at this moment have had the inmost satisfaction of seeing them disgusted with good cause. Nothing is more irritating than to hear worthy writers complaining of depravity, when one is intimately persuaded that they cry out without knowing their reason for doing so.

It becomes necessary, therefore, that I should myself introduce my work to my judges. I will do so in a few lines, solely with a view of avoiding all misunderstanding in the future.

In "Thérèse Raquin," I have sought to study temperaments and not characters. In that lies the entire book. I have selected personages sovereignly dominated by their nerves and their blood, destitute of free will, led at each act of their life by the fatalities of their flesh. Thérèse and Laurent are human brutes, nothing more. I have sought to follow, step by step, throughout the career of these brutes, the secret working of their passions, the promptings of their instinct, the cerebral disorders following a nervous crisis. The amours of my hero and heroine are the satisfying of a necessity; the murder they commit is a consequence of their adultery, a consequence which they accept like wolves accept the slaughtering of sheep; finally, that which I have been obliged to term their remorse, consists in a simple organic disorder, in the rebellion of a nervous system strung to the point of breaking. The soul is entirely wanting; I admit this the more readily as I wished it to be so.

The reader begins, I hope, to understand that my aim has been, before all other, a scientific one. When my two personages, Thérèse and Laurent, were created, I took pleasure

in stating certain problems to myself and in solving them ; thus, I tried to explain the strange union which may be produced between two different temperaments ; I showed the profound agitation of a sanguineous nature coming into contact with a nervous one. When one reads the novel carefully, one will observe that each chapter is the study of a curious case of physiology. In a word, I had but one desire : given a powerful man and an unsated woman, seek the animal within them, even see nothing but the animal, cast them into a violent drama, and scrupulously note the acts and sensations of these beings. I have simply undertaken on two living bodies the analytical work which surgeons perform on corpses.

Admit that it is hard, when one emerges from such a task, still enwrapt in the grave enjoyments of the search for truth, to hear people accuse you of having had for your sole object the painting of obscene pictures. I find myself in the same position as those painters who copy the nude, without the least desire being kindled within them, and who are profoundly surprised when a critic declares himself scandalised by the life-like flesh of their work. While engaged in writing "Thérèse Raquin," I forgot the world, I became lost in the minute and exact copy of life, giving myself up entirely to the analysis of the human mechanism ; and I can assure you that the cruel amours of Thérèse and Laurent had in them nothing immoral to my mind, nothing which could dispose one to evil passions. The humanity of the models disappeared the same as it vanishes in the eyes of the artist who has a naked woman sprawling before him, and who is solely thinking of representing this woman on his canvas in all the

truthfulness of form and colour. Therefore my surprise was great when I heard my work compared to a pool of blood and mire, to a sewer, to a mass of filth, and I know not what else. I know the pretty game of criticising; I have played at it myself; but I admit that the uniformity of the attack rather disconcerted me. What! there was not one of my brother writers who would explain the book, if not defend it! Among the concert of voices exclaiming, "The author of 'Thérèse Raquin' is a wretched, hysterical being who delights in displaying obscenities," I have vainly awaited a voice that replied, "Not at all! this writer is a mere analyst, who may have forgotten himself amidst human putrefaction, but who has forgotten himself there like the doctor forgets himself in the dissecting-room."

Observe that I in no way ask for the sympathy of the press for a work which, as it says, is repugnant to its delicate senses. I am not so ambitious. I am merely astonished that my brother writers should have made me out a kind of literary scavenger—they, whose experienced eyes should discover in ten pages a novelist's intentions; and I am content to humbly implore them to be good enough in future to see me as I am and to discuss me for what I am.

It was easy, though, to understand "Thérèse Raquin," to place one's self on the field of observation and analysis, to show me my real faults, without going and picking up a handful of mud and throwing it in my face in the name of morality. This required only a little intelligence and a few methodical ideas in real criticism. The reproach of immorality, in scientific matters, proves absolutely nothing. I do not know whether my novel is immoral; I admit that I never

troubled myself to make it more or less chaste. What I do know is that I never for a moment thought of introducing into it the filth that these moral persons have discovered ; that I wrote each scene, even the most passionate, with the sole curiosity of the man of science ; that I defy my judges to find in it a single page really licentious, written for the readers of those little pink books, of those indiscreet chronicles of the boudoir and the stage, which are printed ten thousand copies at a time, and warmly recommended by the very newspapers which are so disgusted by the truths in "Thérèse Raquin."

A few insults, a large amount of stupidity, is therefore all I have read up to the present respecting my work. I say so here quietly, the same as I would say it to a friend who should ask me privately what I think of the attitude which criticism has taken up towards me. A writer of great talent, to whom I complained of the little sympathy I have met with, made me this profound answer : " You have an immense fault which will close all doors against you : you cannot converse for two minutes with a fool without showing him that he is one." It must be so ; I can feel the harm I do myself as regards criticism by accusing it of a want of intelligence, and yet I cannot help showing the contempt I feel for its limited horizon and the judgments it delivers with its eyes shut, without the least attempt at method. I speak, be it understood, of current criticism, of that which judges with all the literary prejudices of fools, unable to place itself on the broad, human standpoint required to understand a human work. Never before have I met with such blundering. The few blows that the minor critics have dealt me

with respect to "Thérèse Raquin" have landed, as usual, into space. They hit, essentially, in the wrong place, applauding the capers of a powdered actress, and then complaining of immorality with reference to a physiological study, understanding nothing, unwilling to understand anything, striking always straight before them, if their panic-stricken foolishness bids them strike. It is exasperating to be beaten for a fault one has not committed. At times, I regret not having written something obscene; it seems to me that I should delight in receiving a merited castigation, in the midst of this shower of blows falling so stupidly on my head, like a cartload of bricks, without my knowing why.

In our time there are scarcely more than two or three men capable of reading, understanding, and judging a book. From these I will consent to receive lessons, persuaded as I am that they will not speak without having penetrated my intentions and appreciated the result of my efforts. They would think twice before uttering those grand empty words, morality and literary modesty; they would allow me the right, in these days of liberty in art, of choosing my subjects wherever I thought best, requiring of me no more than conscientious work, aware that folly alone is prejudicial to the dignity of letters. One thing is certain, the scientific analysis which I have attempted to perform in "Thérèse Raquin" would not surprise them; they would see in it the modern method, the instrument of universal inquiry of which the century makes such feverish use to penetrate the future. Whatever their conclusion might be, they would admit my point of departure, the study of temperament and of the

profound modifications of organism under the pressure of circumstances and situations. I should find myself in the presence of real judges, of men honestly seeking for truth, without puerility or false shame, and not thinking it necessary to show disgust at the sight of bare and living anatomical forms. Sincere study, like fire, purifies everything. No doubt to the tribunal I am pleased to picture at this moment my work would appear very humble ; I would that it met with full severity from its critics, I would like to see it emerge black with corrections. But I should at least have the great joy of seeing myself criticised for that which I have attempted to do, and not for that which I have not done.

I can fancy I hear, even now, the sentence of high criticism, of that methodical and naturalistic criticism which has imbued science, history, and literature with new life : “ ‘Thérèse Raquin’ is the study of too exceptional a case ; the drama of modern life is more supple, less wrapt up in horror and madness. Such cases should only occupy a secondary position in a work. The desire to lose no portion of his observations has led the author to give prominence to every detail, and this has added still more tension and harshness to the whole. On the other hand, the style does not possess the simplicity requisite in an analytical novel. It would be necessary, in short, that the writer, to enable him to construct a good novel, should see society with a wider glance, should paint it under its numerous and varied aspects, and should above all employ a plain and natural language.”

I had wished to reply in twenty lines to attacks rendered

irritating by their ingenuous bad faith, and I perceive that I am chatting with myself, as always happens whenever I keep a pen too long in my hand. I therefore stop, knowing that readers do not care for that kind of thing. Had I had the will and the leisure to write a manifesto, perhaps I might have attempted to defend what a journalist, speaking of "Thérèse Raquin," has termed, "putrid literature." But where's the use? The group of naturalistic writers to which I have the honour to belong possesses sufficient courage and activity to produce strong works, carrying their own defence within them. It requires all the blind obstinacy of a certain class of critics to force a novelist to write a preface. As, for the sake of light, I have committed the fault of writing one, I crave the pardon of those intelligent persons who have no need to have a lamp lighted at mid-day to enable them to see clearly.

ÉMILE ZOLA.

THÉRÈSE RAQUIN.

CHAPTER I.

AT the end of the Rue Guénégaud, near the quays, is the Passage du Pont-Neuf, a kind of corridor, narrow and gloomy, joining the Rue Mazarine to the Rue de Seine. This Passage is at most thirty paces long, and a couple of paces wide; it is paved with yellowish flagstones, worn, loose, ever exhaling a rank moisture; the glass roof covering it, and sloping at right angles, is grimy with dirt.

On the lovely summer days, when a hot sun scorches the streets, a sickly light penetrates the dirty glass, and hangs miserably about the Passage. On the dull winter days, on the foggy mornings, the glass reflects only a lurid and obscure light on to the reeking flagstones.

On the left are some low, dark shops, huddled together, emitting puffs of cold cavernous air. There are old book-stalls, toy shops, cardboard box stores, their contents grey with dust reposing vaguely in shadow; the small squares of glass of which the shop fronts are composed, cast greenish reflections on the articles inside. Beyond, the obscure depths, in the rear of the goods displayed, seem like so many gloomy caverns wherein strange fantastic forms move about.

On the right, along the entire length of the Passage, ex-

tends a wall, against which the shop-keepers opposite have fixed narrow cupboards: nameless trifles, goods forgotten there for the last twenty years are displayed on the contracted shelves, which are painted a horrible brown colour. A dealer in sham jewellery has established herself in one of these little cupboards; she sells, for fifteen sous each, rings which repose delicately on a bed of blue velvet at the bottom of a mahogany box.

Above the glass roof the wall towers black, rough-cast, as if affected with leprosy, and covered with scars.

This Passage du Pont-Neuf is not a place of promenade; one uses it to make a short cut, to save a few minutes. It is traversed by busy people, whose sole object is to go straight and quickly to their destination. One meets there apprentices in their working aprons, seamstresses taking home their work, men and women with parcels under their arms; also old men hobbling along in the dim twilight which struggles through the glass roof, and bands of children dismissed from school, who come there to enjoy the noise they make with their wooden shoes, while hopping over the stones. All day long there is a sharp, quick sound of footsteps hurrying along with irritating irregularity; no one speaks, no one loiters; each one hastens on to his business, his head bowed, walking rapidly without so much as a glance at the shops. The shop-keepers gaze anxiously at those passers-by who, for a wonder, stop for a moment opposite their wares.

At night-time three gas-jets enclosed in heavy square lanterns light up the Passage. These lanterns, hanging from the glass roof on which they throw spots of lurid light, diffuse a faint glimmer around, which quivers and at times seems to disappear. The Passage assumes the aspect of a cut-throat alley; huge shadows lengthen on the pavement, puffs of damp air come from the street; (you might imagine

it to be a subterranean gallery dimly lighted by three funeral lamps. The shop-keepers content themselves with the meagre rays which the gas-jets cast on to their windows. Inside their only light is a lamp with a shade placed on a corner of the counter, thus enabling the passers-by to distinguish the depths of these caves where night reigns during the day-time. Among the dark line of shop fronts the windows of the dealer in card-board boxes are a blaze of light ; two lamps pierce the shadows with their yellow flames. On the opposite side a candle stuck inside a lamp-glass throws its feeble rays on to the box of sham jewellery. The owner dozes in her cupboard with her hands under her shawl.

Some years ago opposite to this dealer's there stood a shop, from the dark green woodwork of which damp exuded at all the crevices. The word "Haberdashery" was painted in black letters on a long narrow signboard, and on one of the door panes a woman's name, "Thérèse Raquin," was written in red letters. Right and left were deep show-cases lined with blue paper.

In the day-time, the eye could only distinguish the display of goods in a softened clare-obscure.

On one side was a little linen drapery : gofferred tulle caps at two and three francs each, muslin collars and cuffs ; then some knitted goods, stockings, socks, and braces. Each article, crumpled and discoloured, was miserably hung up to a wire hook. The window was thus filled with pale-coloured unsaleable goods which had a dismal aspect in the transparent obscurity. The new caps, more brightly white, made staring spots on the blue paper with which the woodwork was covered. And, strung all along a rod, the coloured socks were so many gloomy notes amidst the vague and pale effacement of the muslin.

On the other side, in a narrower window, were rows of great balls of green wool, black buttons sewn on white cards,

boxes of all colours and sizes, hair-nets with steel beads spread out on rounds of bluish paper, bundles of knitting needles, patterns of wool-work, rolls of ribbon, a heap of faded and spoiled articles, which had doubtless remained in the same spot undisturbed for five or six years. [Every tint had turned to a dirty grey in this corner rotting with dust and damp.]

Towards noon, in summer, when the sun scorched the streets and squares with his fiercest rays, there was visible, behind the caps in the other window, the pale, grave profile of a young woman. This profile stood out vaguely from the dark shadows which filled the shop. Beneath the sharp low forehead came a long, narrow, delicate nose; the lips were two thin lines of pale pink, and the chin, short and nervous, joined the neck with a full, graceful curve. The body, lost in the shadows, was invisible; the profile alone appeared, of a dull white, pierced by a large black eye, and as if weighed down by a mass of dark hair. It was there for hours together, peaceful and motionless, between two caps on which the damp rods had left lines of rust.

In the evening, when the lamp was lighted, the interior of the shop became visible. It was more broad than deep; at one end was a little counter; at the other, a screw-shaped staircase led to the rooms on the first floor. Against the walls were ranged show-cases, cupboards, and rows of green card-board boxes; four chairs and a table completed the furniture. (The apartment looked bare and cold; the wares packed up, huddled into corners, were not left lying about, brightening the scene with their gay riot of colours.)

Usually, two women presided behind the counter: the young woman with the grave profile, and an [old lady who dozed and smiled. The latter was about sixty; her fat, placid face] looked pale in the lamp-light. A huge tabby cat, perched on a corner of the counter, watched her sleeping.

Lower down, seated on a chair, a young man of about thirty read or talked in an undertone to the young woman. He was small, puny, and feeble in appearance, with pale light hair, very little beard, and a face covered with freckles; he resembled a sickly, spoilt child.]

A little before ten o'clock, the old lady would awake. The shop was then closed, and the whole family would retire upstairs to bed. The tabby cat followed purring, and rubbing his head against each bar of the banisters.

Up above, the lodging was composed of three rooms. First came a dining-room, which also served as a reception room. To the left there was an earthenware stove placed in a recess; opposite was a sideboard; several chairs were ranged along the walls; a round table occupied the centre of the apartment. Beyond came a dark kitchen, behind a glass door. On either side of the dining-room was a bedroom.

The old lady, after kissing her son and daughter-in-law, went to her own chamber. The cat slept on a chair in the kitchen. The young couple retired into their room, which had a second door opening on a stair-case that led out to the Passage by a dark and narrow way.

The husband, who was always shivering with fever, would get into bed; meanwhile, the young wife would open the window to close the outer shutters. She would remain there some minutes, opposite the great, black, rough plastered wall, which rises and extends above the gallery. She would cast a vague glance along this wall, and then, without a word, she too would get into bed, with disdainful indifference.

CHAPTER II.

MADAME RAQUIN had formerly been a draper at Vernon. For nearly five-and-twenty years, she had lived in a small shop in that town. Some years after the death of her husband, she felt a need for rest, and sold her business. Her savings, added to the proceeds of the sale, gave her a sum of forty thousand francs, which she invested, receiving for it an income of two thousand francs per annum. This sum would amply suffice her. She lived a secluded life, sheltered from the excitements and keen anxieties of the world; she looked forward to an existence of peace and tranquil enjoyment.

She rented, for four hundred francs, a small house, with a garden sloping down to the Seine. It was a discreet and secluded dwelling, with a vague conventual odour; a narrow pathway led to this retreat situated amidst large meadows; the windows looked on the river and the deserted slopes of the opposite bank. The good woman, who had passed her fiftieth year, shut herself up in this solitude, and tasted quiet happiness with her son Camille and her niece Thérèse.

Camille was then twenty. His mother still spoilt him as though he were a little boy. She loved him the more that she had so many times snatched him from death during a long childhood of suffering. The boy had had, one after the other, every fever, every complaint imaginable. Madame Raquin fought for fifteen years against the terrible ailments which came in turn to try and rob her of her son. She

conquered them all by her patience, her care, her devotion.

Camille, grown to years of manhood, saved from death, seemed ever shivering from the repeated shocks to his system. Stunted in his growth, he was undersized and weakly. His slender limbs moved slowly and with effort. His mother loved him the more for this weakness which bent his frame. She looked at his poor little pale face with triumphant tenderness, feeling that she had at least ten times restored him to life.

During his rare intervals of health, the child had attended a commercial school in Vernon. There he learnt arithmetic and orthography. His knowledge did not extend beyond the four rules and a very superficial acquaintance with grammar. Later he took lessons in writing and book-keeping. Madame Raquin trembled when she was advised to send her son to college; she knew he would die away from her, she said books would kill him. Camille remained ignorant, and his ignorance seemed like an additional weakness.

At eighteen, unemployed, wearied to death with the coddling with which his mother enveloped him, he became a clerk in a linen merchant's warehouse. His salary was sixty francs a month. He had a restless spirit which made an idle life unendurable to him. He felt more tranquil, his health improved in this brutish labour, this mechanical work which kept him all day bent over invoices and long columns of figures which he had to tot up one by one. In the evening, worn out, light headed, he quite revelled in the dull fatigue which overcame him. He had quite to quarrel with his mother before taking this berth; she would have had him ever at her side between two blankets, far from the accidents of life. The young man assumed a masterful tone; he demanded work as other children de-

mand toys, not from a feeling of duty, but from instinct, from a craving of nature. His mother's tender devotion had produced in him a fierce selfishness; he thought he loved those who pitied and caressed him; but in reality, he lived apart, wrapt up in himself, only caring for his own comfort, trying in every possible way to increase his pleasures. When surfeited with Madame Raquin's tender affection, he threw himself with rapture into a stupid employment which saved him from doctor's draughts and diet drinks. Then, in the evening, on returning from his office, he strolled along the banks of the Seine with his cousin Thérèse.

Thérèse was close upon eighteen. Sixteen years before, when Madame Raquin was still in business, her brother, Captain Degans, brought her a little girl in his arms. He had just come from Algeria.

"Here is a little one who claims you as aunt," said he, with a smile. "Her mother is dead, I do not know what to do with her. I give her to you."

The draper took the child, smiled upon it, kissed its rosy cheeks. Degans remained a week at Vernon. His sister scarcely asked him any questions about the daughter he gave her. She merely knew that the dear little thing was born at Oran, and that her mother was a native of great beauty. The captain, an hour before his departure, handed her the certificate of birth in which Thérèse was recognised as his daughter, and bore his name. He went away, and never returned; a few years later, he was killed in Africa.

Thérèse grew up, sleeping in the same bed as Camille, sharing her aunt's warm caresses. She had an iron constitution, and she was nursed like a delicate child, taking the same medicines as her cousin, kept in the same close atmosphere as the sickly boy. For hours, she stayed cowering before the fire, pensive, staring at the flames without

blinking. This enforced invalid life caused her to retire within herself ; she contracted the habit of speaking in low tones, of walking about noiselessly, of remaining silent and motionless on a chair, her eyes wide open and gazing into vacancy. And when she raised an arm, or lifted a foot, she betrayed a feline suppleness, short and powerful muscles, a great energy, a strong passion lying dormant in her slumbering flesh.

One day, her cousin had fallen down fainting ; she had raised him up and carried him with an abrupt gesture, and this display of strength had brought a red patch of colour on either cheek. The secluded life she led, the debilitating treatment to which she was subjected, could not weaken her spare and robust frame ; her complexion alone suffered, assuming pale yellow tints, and making her almost ugly, when in the shade. Sometimes she went to the window and gazed on the opposite houses, on which the sun was shedding its golden rays.

When Madame Raquin sold her business and retired to the little house on the banks of the river, Thérèse had secret transports of joy. Her aunt had so often repeated : “Be quiet, don’t make a noise,” that she had kept carefully concealed from others all the impetuosity of her nature. She possessed a supreme calm, an apparent tranquillity which disguised the most violent storms. She fancied herself to be ever in her cousin’s room, near a dying child ; she acquired the quiet movements, the silence, the placidity, and the stammering utterance of an old woman. When she saw the garden, the white river, the vast green slopes which extended to the horizon, she had a wild longing to run and shout ; she felt her heart throbbing in her bosom ; but not a muscle of her face stirred, and a quiet smile alone replied to her aunt’s inquiry as to whether she liked their new home.

Life grew brighter for her. She retained her easy movements, her calm, indifferent expression, she still looked the child reared in a sick-bed ; but she lived internally a turbulent, passionate existence. When she was alone on the grass by the water's edge, she lay flat on her face like an animal, her black eyes dilated, her body crouching, ready to spring. And she remained thus for hours, thinking of nothing, scorched by the sun, happy to thrust her fingers into the ground. She had wild dreams ; she glanced defiance at the river as it flowed, she imagined the water was about to leap up and attack her ; then she pulled herself together, put herself on the defensive, and angrily wondered how she could conquer the flood.

In the evenings, Thérèse, quiet and silent, stitched by the side of her aunt ; her countenance seemed to slumber in the light which softly streamed from beneath the shade of the lamp. Camille, huddled up in an easy chair, pondered over his calculations. A solitary word uttered in low tones, alone broke, now and again, the silence of this sleepy interior.

Madame Raquin contemplated her children with placid affection. She had resolved that they should marry. She continued treating her son as a dying man ; she trembled when she thought of her own end, and of leaving him alone and suffering. Then she relied on Thérèse, considering that the young girl would be a watchful nurse for Camille. Her niece, with her quiet ways, her silent devotion, inspired her with boundless confidence. She had seen her at work, she would give her to her son as his guardian angel. This marriage was a settled plan.

The children had long known they were to be married one day. They had grown up in this knowledge, which had thus become to them familiar and natural. This union was spoken of in the family as a necessity of fate. Madame Raquin had said : " We will wait until Thérèse is onc-and-





THERÈSE'S INDIGNATION AGAINST CAMILLE.

twenty." And they waited patiently, without desire, without embarrassment.

Camille, whose blood was impoverished by his bad health, had never felt the eager desires of adolescence. He had remained a little boy with his cousin, he kissed her as he kissed his mother, from habit, without losing any of his selfish calm. He saw in her an agreeable companion, who helped to amuse him, and who, occasionally, made his diet drinks. When he played with her, or held her in his arms, he felt as if she were a boy; his flesh received no exciting thrill. And never had it struck him, at such times, to kiss the warm lips of the young girl, who was struggling and laughing nervously.

Thérèse also seemed to remain cold and indifferent. She sometimes cast her large eyes on Camille, gazing fixedly at him for several minutes with a sovereign calm. Her lips alone had then little almost imperceptible movements. One could read nothing on that closed face, which was always held gently attentive by an implacable will. Whenever the marriage was discussed, Thérèse became grave, merely approving with an inclination of her head all that Madame Raquin said. Camille went to sleep.

In the summer-evenings, the young people wandered away to the water-side. Camille wearied of his mother's incessant cares; he grew rebellious, he wanted to run about, make himself ill, escape the coaxings which nauseated him. He would lead Thérèse away, and persuade her to wrestle and play on the grass. One day, he pushed his cousin and made her fall; the young girl regained her feet with a spring, and with savage fury, burning face, and flashing eyes, she threw herself upon him with uplifted arms. Camille slipped down on the ground. He was filled with fear.

Months, years passed by. The day fixed for the wedding arrived. Madame Raquin took Thérèse aside, spoke to her

of her parents, related the history of her birth. The young girl listened to her aunt, and kissed her, without answering a word. At night, Thérèse, instead of going to her own bedroom, to the left of the staircase, entered her cousin's room, to the right. This was the only change in her life that day. Next morning, when the young couple came down, Camille had his usual sickly languor, his selfish, saintly quietude, and Thérèse still retained her gentle indifference, her expressionless face so frightfully calm.

CHAPTER III.

A week after his marriage, Camille told his mother plainly that he intended leaving Vernon and residing in Paris. Madame Raquin objected ; she had settled down, she did not wish for any change in her mode of life. Her son had a sharp attack of " nerves," he threatened to have an illness, if she did not yield to his whim.

" I have never thwarted your plans," he said. " I have married my cousin, I have taken all the drugs you gave me. The least I may expect now is to be allowed a will of my own, and that you should be of my way of thinking. We will leave here at the end of the month."

Madame Raquin passed a sleepless night. Camille's resolve upset her life, and she tried desperately to remodel it. By degrees she became calm. She reflected that children might be added to the family and that her modest competence would then be insufficient. More money must be made, business must be resumed, some lucrative trade found for Thérèse. By the morning, the notion of leaving Vernon had grown familiar to her. She had formed the plan of their new life.

Breakfast found her quite cheerful.

" This is what we will do," she said to her children. " I will go to-morrow to Paris ; I will look about for a modest haberdashery business, and Thérèse and I will again occupy ourselves in selling needles and thread. That will give us something to do. You, Camille, can act as you please ; bask in the sun, or take a situation."

“I shall take a situation,” replied the young man.

The truth was that a foolish ambition had alone caused Camille’s resolve. He longed to be employed in a large house of business ; he coloured with pleasure when contemplating himself, in his dreams, in the midst of a huge office, with lute-string sleeves on his arms, and a pen behind his ear.

Thérèse was not consulted ; she had always shown such passive obedience that her aunt and her husband no longer troubled themselves to ask her opinion. She went where they went, she did as they did, without a word, without a murmur, without even seeming aware of any change.

Madame Raquin came to Paris and went straight to the Passage du Pont-Neuf. An old maid at Vernon had directed her to one of her relatives, who had a haberdashery business in this Passage, which she wished to dispose of. The old lady found the shop rather small and rather dark ; but in making her way through Paris she had been bewildered with the noisy traffic of the streets and the display of luxury in the shops, and this narrow gallery, these modest windows, reminded her of her own old, quiet shop. She could almost imagine herself still in the country, she breathed again, she thought her dear children would be happy in this remote corner. The modest sum asked for the stock decided her ; the price was two thousand francs. The rent of the shop and the first floor came to no more than twelve hundred francs. Madame Raquin, who had saved some four thousand francs, calculated that she could purchase the stock, and pay the first year’s rent without touching her capital. Camille’s salary and the takings from the shop would, she thought, suffice for current expenses, so that she need not be using her income, which would swell the capital for a provision for her grand-children.

She returned radiant to Vernon, announcing that she had found a pearl, a delightful nook, in the heart of Paris.

Gradually, after some days, in her evening chats, the damp, dark shop in the Passage grew into a palace; she saw it in memory, commodious, large, quiet, possessed of a thousand inappreciable advantages.

“Ah! my good Thérèse,” she said, “you will see how happy we shall be in that nook! There are three fine rooms upstairs. The Passage is very lively. We will dress our windows charmingly. You will see how pleasant life will be!”

And her tongue kept wagging on. All her trading instincts were aroused; she gave Thérèse lessons in advance on selling, buying, and the tricks of trade generally. So the family left the house by the Seine; and on the evening of the same day they were installed in the Passage du Pont-Neuf.

When Thérèse stepped into the house which was to be in future her home, she felt as if descending into the fresh earth of a new grave. A feeling of nausea rose in her throat, she shivered with fear. She looked at the damp, dirty corridor, she visited the shop, went upstairs, and glanced into every apartment; these bare, unfurnished rooms were frightful in their dismantled solitude. The young wife made no sign, said no word. She was as though petrified. Her aunt and her husband having come downstairs, she sat down on one of the trunks, her hands tightly compressed, her throat filled with sobs, unable to weep.

Madame Raquin, in face of the reality, was embarrassed, ashamed of her dreams. She tried to defend her choice. She found a remedy for each freshly discovered inconvenience, explained the darkness by saying the weather was cloudy, and wound up by affirming that a good sweeping was all that was necessary.

“Bah!” replied Camille, “it will all do very well. Besides, we shall only want to be upstairs at night-time. I

shall never be home before five or six o'clock. You two will be together and keep each other company."

Never would the young man have consented to live in such a hole, had he not counted on the delights of his office. He told himself he would be comfortable all day at his place of business, and that in the evening he could go to bed early.

For a whole week the house and shop were in confusion. From the first day, Thérèse sat herself behind the counter and she never stirred from that position. Madame Raquin was surprised at this dejected attitude; she had thought the young wife would have sought to adorn her dwelling, put flowers in the windows, ask to have the rooms repapered, and to have fresh curtains and carpets. Whenever she herself proposed any alteration or embellishment:

"What is the use?" her niece would quietly reply. "We shall do very well as we are, we need no luxuries?"

It was Madame Raquin who had to arrange the rooms and put the shop in order. Thérèse grew impatient at last with her aunt's perpetual motion; she hired a charwoman, and insisted on her aunt sitting down with her.

Camille was a whole month without finding employment. He lived as little as possible in the shop, and dawdled about all day. He grew so bored that he spoke of returning to Vernon. Eventually, he obtained a clerkship in the Orleans Railway Office. He drew a hundred francs a month. His dream was realised.

He went out every morning at eight o'clock. He walked down the Rue Guénégaud to the quays. Then, at an easy pace, his hands in his pockets, he followed the Seine from the Institute to the Jardin des Plantes. This long walk, twice a day, never wearied him. He would watch the water flowing by, and stop to look at the loads of wood going down the river. He thought of nothing. He would often

loit in front of Notre-Dame, examining the scaffolding with which the cathedral was then surrounded for repairs. These huge pieces of timber amused him without his knowing why. Then, he would cast a passing glance at the Port aux Vins, and count the cabs coming from the railway station. In the evening, scarcely knowing what he did, his head full of some silly story picked up at the office, he would cross the Jardin des Plantes, and, if he were not in a hurry, visit the bears. He would remain there for half-an-hour, leaning over the pit, watching the bears with their heavy movements; the ways of these huge creatures pleased him; he gazed at them with his eyes and mouth wide open, feeling an idiotic delight in beholding them move. At length he would make up his mind to go home, walking slowly, amusing himself with the passers-by, the vehicles, and the shops.

Directly he arrived he would dine, and then begin reading. He had purchased Buffon's works, and, every evening, he gave himself a task of twenty or thirty pages, in spite of the weariness which this study caused him. He read also Thiers's "History of the Consulate and the Empire," and Lamartine's "History of the Girondins," or some book of popular science. He fancied he was completing his education. Sometimes he insisted on his wife listening to certain pages and anecdotes. He wondered immensely how Thérèse could remain all the evening pensive and silent, without being tempted to read a book. Privately, he came to the conclusion that his wife was by no means intellectual.

Thérèse impatiently rejected books. She preferred to remain idle, her eyes fixed on vacancy, her thoughts floating in dreams. Otherwise, she preserved an equable temper; all her will was set on reducing herself to a passive instrument of supreme complacency and abnegation.

The business jogged quietly along. The profits each

month were regularly the same. The customers were mostly the work-girls of the neighbourhood. Every five minutes a young girl came in and bought a few sous' worth of goods. Thérèse served them always with the same words and stereotyped smile. Madame Raquin was more active, more genial, and, truth to tell, it was she who attracted and retained the customers.

For three years the days followed and resembled each other. Camille never once absented himself from his desk; his mother and his wife rarely left the shop. Thérèse, passing her days in a damp shadow, in a dreary, crushing silence, saw her life spread out before her, bare and waste, bringing each night the same cold couch, and each morning the same empty monotonous day.

CHAPTER IV.

ONCE a week, on Thursday evening, the Raquins held a reception. A large lamp was lighted in the dining-room, and a kettle was put on the fire to boil water for tea. It was quite an event. This evening contrasted with the others. It seemed to this orderly family like an outburst of mad gaiety ; they kept it up until eleven o'clock.

Madame Raquin had found in Paris one of her old friends, the police commissary Michaud, who was stationed for twenty years at Vernon, and had there occupied part of the same house with herself. They had been intimate friends ; and when the widow had sold her stock, and moved to the little house by the riverside, they had gradually lost sight of each other. Michaud left the country some months later, and went to enjoy peacefully in Paris, in the Rue de Seine, his pension of fifteen hundred francs. One rainy day he met his old friend in the Passage du Pont-Neuf ; and that evening he dined with the Raquins.

This was the foundation of the Thursday receptions. The old police commissary was in the habit of coming punctually once a week. He brought, after a time, his son Olivier, a tall, thin, plain fellow of thirty, who had married a little, gentle, delicate wife. Olivier held a post worth three thousand francs at the Préfecture, and of this Camille was very envious. He was head clerk in the police office of order and safety. From the first visit, Thérèse detested this stiff, haughty man, who thought he was honouring the shop

in the Passage with his lean, lanky presence and the delicate health of his poor little wife.

Camille introduced another guest, an old employee of the Orleans railway named Grivet who had been serving there for twenty years, and was now head clerk, with two thousand one hundred francs salary. It was he who gave out the work to the employees in Camille's office, and the latter held him in considerable respect. In his dreams he told himself Grivet would die one day, and at any rate he might hope to replace him in perhaps ten years. Grivet was delighted with his reception from Madame Raquin, and he came every Thursday with perfect regularity. Six months later his weekly visit had become in his eyes a duty. He went to the Passage du Pont-Neuf as he went daily to his office, mechanically, by instinct, like an animal.

Thenceforward these gatherings became very pleasant. At seven o'clock, Madame Raquin lit the fire, placed the lamp in the centre of the table, brought out a box of dominoes, and dusted the tea-service which was on the sideboard. At eight o'clock precisely, old Michaud and Grivet met outside the shop, coming one from the Rue de Seine, the other from the Rue Mazarine. They entered, and all the family went upstairs. They seated themselves round the table, waiting for Olivier Michaud and his wife, who were always late. When all had arrived, Madame Raquin poured out tea. Camille emptied the box of dominoes on the American cloth, and each one became engrossed in the game. No noise but the click of the dominoes was to be heard. After each game the players quarrelled for two or three minutes, then silence fell again gloomily, broken only by sharp sounds.

Thérèse played with an indifference which irritated Camille. She would take François, the large tabby cat whom Madame Raquin had brought from Vernon, on her lap, and caress him

with one hand, while she placed her dominoes with the other. The Thursday evenings were a torment to her. She often complained of some ailment in order to excuse herself from playing, so as to sit there listlessly, half asleep. With an elbow on the table, and her cheek resting on the palm of her hand, she would watch the guests of her aunt and her husband; she saw them through a kind of yellow, smoky fog which came from the lamp. All those heads exasperated her. She looked from one to the other with profound disgust and sullen irritation. Old Michaud had a leaden-hued face, marked with red blotches—one of those dead-looking faces of old people who have reached second childhood; Grivet had the narrow countenance, round eyes, and thin lips of an idiot; Olivier, whose cheek-bones protruded, had a ridiculous body, surmounted by a stiff, insignificant head; as for Suzanne, Olivier's wife, she was ghastly pale, with uncertain eyes, white lips, and indistinct features.

And Thérèse did not find one man, one living creature among these weird, grotesque beings with whom she was shut up. Sometimes she imagined herself buried at the bottom of a vault, in company with mechanical corpses, who moved their heads and stirred their limbs in obedience to invisibly pulled strings. The heavy air of the dining-room stifled her; the shivering silence, the yellowish rays of the lamp, penetrated her with a vague terror, an indescribable anguish.

Downstairs at the shop door there was hung a bell, the sharp ring of which announced the entrance of a customer Thérèse would sit listening, and when the bell sounded, she hastily descended, happy, relieved at the excuse for quitting the company. She attended leisurely to the purchaser. When the latter had departed, she remained sitting behind the counter as long as possible, dreading to go up again feeling a genuine comfort in no longer having Grivet and

Olivier before her eyes. The damp atmosphere of the shop cooled the fever which burnt her hands. And she relapsed into the grave reverie that was now habitual with her.

But she could not remain long away. Camille chafed at her absence; he could not understand anyone preferring the shop to the dining-room on a Thursday evening. And he would lean over the banisters, looking for his wife.

“Well!” he would cry, “what are you doing there? Why do you not come up? Grivet has the devil’s own luck. He has won again.”

The young wife would rise reluctantly and come up, resuming her place opposite old Michaud, whose drooping lips broke into repulsive smiles. And, until eleven o’clock, she remained sunk into her chair, watching François, whom she held on her lap, to avoid seeing the puppets who were grimacing around her.

CHAPTER V.

ONE Thursday, on returning from his office, Camille brought with him a fine-looking, square shouldered man, whom he pushed inside the shop with a familiar gesture.

“Mother,” called he to Madame Raquin, “do you recognize this gentleman?”

The old lady looked at the handsome fellow, tried to recall his features and failed. Thérèse placidly looked on.

“What!” said Camille, “don’t you recognize Laurent, little Laurent, whose father has such fine corn fields near Jeufosse? Don’t you remember? We were school-fellows; he used to fetch me in the morning coming from his uncle’s, who was our neighbour, and you used to give him slices of bread and jam.”

Madame Raquin suddenly recollected little Laurent, whom she found marvellously grown. It was quite twenty years since she had seen him. She sought to obliterate the effect of her cold reception of him by a flood of memories, and motherly attentions. Laurent had seated himself, he smiled quietly, replied in clear tones, and cast calm and easy glances around him.

“Just fancy,” said Camille, “this fellow has been employed for the last eighteen months at the Orleans railway station, and we have never met until this evening. It is such a vast, such an important concern!”

The young man made this remark with wide open eyes and pursed lips, quite proud of being a humble wheel in the great machine. He went on, shaking his head the while :

“Oh! but he is getting on well, he is already earning a salary of fifteen hundred francs. His father sent him to college; he has studied for the bar and learnt painting. You will dine with us, Laurent, won't you?”

“With pleasure,” replied Laurent frankly.

He put down his hat and made himself at home in the shop. Madame Raquin hurried off to her saucepans. Thérèse, who had not yet uttered a word, looked at the newcomer. He was so unlike any man she had seen before. Laurent, tall, powerful, fresh-coloured, astonished her. She examined with a kind of admiration his low forehead fringed with bushy black hair, his round cheeks, his bright red lips, his regular features, his sanguine beauty. For an instant she rested her eyes upon his neck; this neck was short and thick, fat and powerful. Then she lost herself in contemplation of his great hands spread out upon his knees; the fingers were square shaped; the closed fist would surely be enormous, and capable of felling an ox. Laurent was a true son of the soil, with a somewhat heavy gait, a round back, slow and precise movements, and a quiet obstinate manner. Beneath his clothing one could have felt round well-developed muscles, and a thick firm frame. And Thérèse examined him with curiosity, from his fists to his face, feeling little thrills when her eye encountered his bull-like neck.

Camille brought out his volumes of Buffon and his penny numbers, to show his friend that he also was studying. Then, as if replying to a question which he had been asking himself for some minutes:

“But,” said he to Laurent, “you must remember my wife? Don't you recollect the little cousin who used to play with us at Vernon?”

“I recognized madame at once,” replied Laurent, looking Thérèse in the face.

Under this steady gaze, which seemed to penetrate her, the young wife felt a kind of uneasiness. She put on a forced smile, and exchanged a few words with Laurent and her husband; then she hurried off to her aunt. She was suffering.

Dinner was served. Directly after the soup, Camille considered it his duty to talk to his friend.

"How is your father?" he asked him.

"Well, I don't exactly know," replied Laurent. "We have quarrelled; we have not written to each other for five years' past."

"Is it possible?" cried Camille, astounded at such a monstrous state of things.

"Yes, the good man has views of his own. As he is always going to law with his neighbours, he sent me to college, hoping later to find in me a lawyer who would gain every cause for him. Oh! my father's ambition is all practical; he tries to make a profit even of his hobbies."

"And you refused to become a lawyer?" said Camille, more and more astonished.

"By Jove! yes," replied his friend, laughing. "For two years I pretended to be reading up for it, in order to receive the twelve hundred francs my father allowed me. I lived with a college chum, who is an artist, and I dabbled in painting. This amused me; it is a pleasant profession, not at all fatiguing. We smoked and fooled about all day."

The Raquin family opened their eyes wide.

"Unluckily," continued Laurent, "this could not last for ever. My father found I was deceiving him, he stopped my allowance and advised me to come and dig with him. I then tried painting sacred subjects; poor business that. As I clearly saw I should soon be starving, I threw art to the devil and looked out for a berth. My father will die one of these days; then I shall be able to live without working."

Laurent spoke in quiet tones. He had, in a few words, described himself fully in relating his characteristic history. He was thoroughly lazy at heart, with fleshly appetites, and a decided taste for easy and lasting enjoyments. This great, powerful frame desired, above all, to have nothing to do, to wallow from hour to hour in gluttony and idleness. He would have liked nothing better than to feed well, sleep well, and fully gratify his passions, without the trouble of putting out a hand, or undergoing the slightest fatigue.

The profession of the law had alarmed him, and he shuddered at the notion of tilling the ground. He had thrown himself into art, hoping to find therein an idle mode of living; the brush seemed to him a light instrument to handle; besides, he thought success was easy. He dreamed of a life of cheap voluptuousness, a beautiful life full of women, of resting on divans, of feastings and drinking bouts. This dream lasted as long as his father sent supplies. But, as soon as the young man, now thirty years old, perceived poverty on the horizon, he began to reflect; he felt himself a coward at the sight of privations; he would not have fasted a whole day for the highest glories of art. As he told them, he had sent painting to the devil the day he had discovered that it would never enable him to gratify his large appetites. His first attempts had been beneath mediocrity; his boorish eye gave its character to his portrayal of nature; his colours dirty, his buildings tottering, his faces out of drawing, defied all criticism. Not feeling much vanity as an artist, he was not inordinately dejected when he found himself obliged to throw down his brushes. His only real regret was his college chum's studio, that vast apartment in which he had so voluptuously revelled for four or five years. He regretted, too, the women who came as models, and whose charms were not beyond his means. This world of sensual enjoyment left

him with keen carnal longings. He was fairly comfortable, however, with his present clerkship; he lived an easy animal life, he liked this daily routine, which did not tire him, and which left his mind inactive. Two things alone irritated him: he missed the women, and a dinner at an eighteen-sou restaurant did not satisfy the gluttonous appetite of his stomach.

Camille listened and stared at him like an idiot. This sickly fellow, whose enfeebled and wearied body had never felt a fleshly desire, dreamed childish dreams of this studio life described by his friend. He thought of the women displaying their bare skin. He questioned Laurent.

"So," said he, "there were really women who took their chemises off before you?"

"Certainly," replied Laurent, with a smile, and a look towards Thérèse, who had turned very pale.

"That must have had a singular effect on you," resumed Camille, with a childish laugh. "I should have felt embarrassed. The first time, you must have been quite confused."

Laurent had spread out one of his large hands, the palm of which he was attentively examining. His fingers quivered slightly, and his cheeks flushed.

"The very first time," continued he, as if talking to himself, "I think I found it quite natural. This artist life is very amusing, but not remunerative. I had one model with an adorable warm complexion: firm flesh, dazzling skin, magnificent bosom, broad hips."

Laurent looked up and saw Thérèse opposite him, silent and motionless. The young woman was watching him with a burning intensity. Her eyes, of a dull black, seemed two fathomless depths, and her partly open lips discovered rosy lights within her mouth. She seemed dazed, overwhelmed; she drank in every word.

Laurent's glance went from Thérèse to Camille. The quondam artist restrained a smile. He finished his sentence with an expressive gesture, large and voluptuous, which the young wife followed with her eyes. They were at dessert, and Madame Raquin had gone downstairs to attend to a customer.

When the cloth was removed, Laurent, who had been silent for some minutes, addressed Camille abruptly :

"I must paint your likeness," said he.

This idea charmed Madame Raquin and her son. Thérèse remained silent.

"We are now in summer," resumed Laurent, "and as we leave the office at four o'clock, I could come here and be painting two hours every evening. It will be finished in a week."

"That's it," replied Camille, colouring with pleasure ; "you can dine with us. I'll have my hair curled, and wear my black frock-coat."

The clock struck eight. Grivet and Michaud came in. Olivier and Suzanne followed.

Camille introduced his friend to the company. Grivet drew himself up. He detested Laurent, whose salary had, in his opinion, been increased too rapidly. Besides, it was a serious matter introducing a new guest: the Raquins' friends could not receive a stranger with open arms.

Laurent behaved like a jolly good fellow. He took in the situation, he wished to please, to make a good impression at once. He told some stories, enlivened the party with his hearty laugh, and even won over old Grivet himself.

Thérèse, on that evening, did not attempt to escape to the shop. She remained seated until eleven o'clock, playing and chatting, avoiding Laurent's eye, which, however, was not directed towards her. The sanguine temperament of

this fellow, his full tones, his hearty laugh, the powerful and pungent odour which escaped from his person, disturbed the young wife, and threw her into a kind of nervous anguish.

CHAPTER VI.

LAURENT, from that day forward, came nearly every evening to the Raquins'. He lived in the Rue Saint-Victor, opposite the Port aux Vins, where he hired a little furnished room for eighteen francs a month ; this room, with a sloping roof and a skylight window opening like a snuff-box, was hardly six yards square. Laurent returned home as late as possible to this garret. Before he met Camille, as he had not money enough to frequent cafés, he spun out the time at the cheap restaurant where he dined, smoking pipes and sipping a cup of coffee with a dash of brandy in it, which cost three sous. He then strolled home to the Rue Saint-Victor, sauntering along the quays, sitting down on the benches on fine evenings.

The shop in the Passage du Pont-Neuf became for him a charming retreat, warm, quiet, full of friendly words and ways. He saved the three sous for his coffee, and drank with relish Madame Raquin's excellent tea. Until ten o'clock, he stayed there, dozing, digesting, making himself at home, and never left before he had helped Camille to close the shop.

One evening, he brought his easel and his box of colours. He was to begin Camille's portrait the following day. A canvas was bought, every preparation was made. At length the artist set to work in the bed-room of the young people ; he found there, he said, the most suitable light.

He took three evenings to sketch the head. He touched the canvas timidly with the charcoal, in little uncertain

touches ; his drawing, stiff and laboured, reminded one grotesquely of the early masters. He copied Camille's features as a student copies a lay figure, with a hesitating touch and an awkward exactness, which lent the face a scowling expression. On the fourth day, he stuck some atoms of colour on his palette and began painting with the tips of the brushes ; he dotted the canvas with little dirty spots, then he made short lines, close together, like pencil shading.

At the end of each sitting, Madame Raquin and Camille went into ecstasies. Laurent said they must be patient, that the likeness would strike them later.

From the time the portrait was commenced Thérèse never quitted the impromptu studio. She left her aunt alone behind the counter ; on the slightest pretext she went upstairs and remained watching Laurent paint.

Ever grave, oppressed, more than ever pale and silent, she sat and followed the progress of the brush. And yet this spectacle did not seem to afford her much amusement ; she came as if drawn by a power, she stayed as if held by a spell. Laurent turned round occasionally, and smiling asked if the portrait pleased her. She scarcely replied, shivered, and relapsed into her state of quiet rapture.

Laurent meditated deeply on his way home at night to the Rue Saint-Victor ; he argued the point with himself whether he should or should not become Thérèse's lover.

"There is a woman," he said to himself, "who will be my mistress if ever I choose her to be. She is always there, hanging about me, watching me, measuring me, weighing me. She trembles, she has a most strange face, mutely passionate. She most certainly wants a lover ; that is plainly read in her eyes. Camille is after all not much of a man."

Laurent laughed inwardly, at the thought of his friend's pallor and leanness. Then he continued to himself :

"She is bored in that shop. I go there because I have

nowhere else to go. If I had, I should not often be found at the Passage du Pont-Neuf. It is damp and dismal, enough to kill a woman. Most decidedly she admires me; then why not I instead of another?"

He stopped short, full of self-conceit, and looked with an absent air at the Seine as it flowed along.

"By Jove! so much the worse," he cried; "I will kiss her the first opportunity. I bet she will fall at once into my arms."

He walked on, and began to waver.

"After all, she is ugly," he thought. "She has a long nose, a big mouth. And, besides, I am not a bit in love with her. Perhaps I shall get into some bother. This requires consideration."

Laurent, who was very prudent, turned these thoughts over for a full week. He calculated all the possible results of an intimacy with Thérèse; he only decided to try his fortune, when it became clear to him that it was his own interest to do so.

Thérèse was to him ugly, it is true, and he did not love her; but, after all, she would be no expense to him; the women whom he could obtain cheaply were, certainly, neither prettier nor more beloved. Economy was already advising him to take his friend's wife. On the other hand, he had not for a long time satisfied his carnal desires; money being scarce, he had denied his flesh, and he did not care to lose the opportunity of gratifying it a little. Moreover, an intimacy of this kind could not have unpleasant consequences. Thérèse would, for her own sake, conceal everything, and he could easily break off with her whenever he wished; even supposing Camille discovered all and was furious, he would annihilate him with one blow if he became nasty. The question presented itself to Laurent in all its bearings, as easy and attractive.

From this moment he lived in serenity, biding his time. He had decided to boldly take the first opportunity that offered. He saw a vista before him of blissful evenings. All the Raquins would add to his pleasures : Thérèse would cool his blood ; Madame Raquin would care for him like a mother ; Camille, by his conversation, would help to while away the long evenings in the shop.

The portrait was approaching completion, the opportunities did not present themselves. Thérèse was always present, dejected and anxious ; but Camille never left the room, and Laurent did not see how to get rid of him for an hour. He was obliged, however, to announce one day that the portrait would be finished at the next sitting. Madame Raquin said they must dine together to celebrate the event.

Next day, when Laurent had given the finishing touch to the picture, all the family joined in admiring the excellent likeness. The portrait was wretched, the prevailing tint dirty grey, with large purple blotches. Laurent could not use the most brilliant colours without rendering them dingy and muddy ; he had unconsciously exaggerated the undecided colouring of his model, and Camille's face had the greenish hue of a drowned man ; the distorted drawing convulsed the features, thus making the ghastly resemblance the more striking. But Camille was enchanted ; he found that he had a distinguished appearance on canvas.

When he had sufficiently admired himself, he declared he must go and get two bottles of champagne. Madame Raquin went down again to the shop. The artist was left alone with Thérèse.

The young wife remained seated, looking vaguely before her. She seemed trembling expectantly. Laurent hesitated ; he examined his canvas, he played with his brushes. Time was flying, Camille might return, the opportunity would, perhaps, never recur. The painter turned abruptly and

found himself face to face with Thérèse. They looked at each other for some seconds.

Then, with a violent movement, Laurent bent down and pressed her to his breast. He threw back her head, while crushing her lips with his own. She made a wild, angry movement of resistance, and, suddenly yielding, slipped to the ground. They did not utter one word. The act was silent and brutish.



LAURENT PASSIONATELY EMBRACES THÉRÈSE.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM the very beginning the lovers found their intimacy absolutely necessary, decreed by fate, and, indeed, quite natural. At their first interview they addressed each other familiarly, they embraced, without embarrassment, without blushes, as if this intimacy had lasted for years. They lived at ease in these new relations, with perfect tranquillity and effrontery.

They arranged their meetings. Thérèse not being able to go out, it was settled that Laurent should visit her. The young woman explained to him, quite composedly, the plan she had arranged. The interviews were to be in her own bedroom. The lover could come in by the alley which communicated with the Passage, and Thérèse would open the stair-case door. At this time, Camille would be at his office, and Madame Raquin down in the shop. Such audacity ought to succeed.

Laurent agreed. Prudent though he was, he had a sort of brute courage, the courage of a man with a mighty fist. The grave calm air of his mistress decided him to come and enjoy a passion so boldly offered. He made an excuse to ask for a couple of hours from the head of his department, and he hastened to the Passage du Pont-Neuf.

On entering the Passage, he experienced an exquisite voluptuousness. The dealer in false jewellery was sitting just facing the door of the alley. He waited for her attention to be diverted by a young sempstress who came to buy a brass ring or some ear-rings. Then he rapidly entered the

alley ; he mounted the dark, narrow staircase, leaning on the damp walls. His feet struck against the stone steps ; at the sound of each blow he felt a burning sensation traverse his chest. A door opened. On the threshold, in a bright light, he saw Thérèse in quite dazzling deshabelle, with her hair in a tight knot behind her head. She closed the door, she hung upon his neck. From her person there came a warm aroma of fresh linen and of newly washed skin.

Laurent, to his amazement, found his mistress beautiful. He had never really seen this woman. Thérèse, supple and strong, clasped him in her arms, throwing her head back, and on her face played burning light, passionate smiles. This lover's face was as though transfigured ; she looked madly caressing ; she was beaming, with moist lips, and shining eyes. This woman, lithely twisting in billowy undulations, was beautiful with a strange beauty full of transport. Her face looked as though illumined from within, while her flesh seemed to emit flames. And her burning blood, her straining nerves, exhaled around her a warm effluvia, a pungent and penetrating atmosphere.

At the first kiss, she revealed herself a courtesan. Her unsatiated frame flung itself distractedly into voluptuousness. She awoke as from a dream, and passion was born within her. She passed from Camille's feeble arms to Laurent's powerful embrace, and this contact with a strong man gave her a sudden shock which awoke her to fleshly desires. All her nervous woman's instincts burst forth with astounding violence ; her mother's blood, that African blood which burned in her veins, began to flow and to throb furiously in her slender and still almost virgin body. She displayed herself, offered herself unreservedly, with sovereign immodesty. Her whole frame, from head to foot, was agitated with prolonged thrills

Never had Laurent met such a woman. He was astonished, ill at ease. Usually his mistresses did not receive him with such warmth; he was used to cold, indifferent kisses, to wearied and surfeited flames. Thérèse's fits and sobs almost frightened him, though they excited his sensual curiosity. When he left her, he reeled like a drunken man. The next day, when his cunning and prudence had returned, he debated as to the wisdom of again visiting this woman whose kisses put him in such a fever. He at first fully decided to stay away. Then he was filled with alarm. He would forget and never again see Thérèse in her nakedness, with her soft licentious caresses, and yet there she was ever before his mind's eye, waiting, holding out her arms. The physical suffering caused by this vision became intolerable.

He yielded, he made an appointment, he returned to the Passage du Pont-Neuf.

From that day, Thérèse formed part of his existence. He did not accept her as yet, but he endured her. He had hours of terror, moments of prudence, and, in short, this intimacy disturbed him greatly; but his fears, his uneasiness, yielded to his desires. The meetings succeeded each other and multiplied.

Thérèse had none of these misgivings. She gave herself up entirely, going straight where her passion urged her. This woman whom circumstances had led, and who now went her own way, laid bare her whole being, describing her life.

Sometimes she passed her arms round Laurent's neck, she hung on his breast, and, still panting:

"Oh! if you only knew," she would say, "how I have suffered! I have been reared in the damp air of a sick-room. I used to sleep with Camille; at night I kept as far as I could from him, disgusted with the sickly odour which emanated from his body. He was spiteful and obstinate;

he would take no medicine that I did not share; to please my aunt I drank some of all the nasty drugs, I wonder I am not dead. They made me ugly, my poor friend; they stole from me all I had to boast of, and you cannot love me as I love you."

She wept, she kissed Laurent, and continued with sullen animosity:

"I don't wish them harm. They have reared me and saved me from poverty. But I should have preferred desertion to their hospitality. I longed for fresh air; as a child I longed to trot along the roads, bare-footed in the dust, begging my bread, living like a gipsy. They tell me my mother was the daughter of an African chief; I have often thought of her, and understood that I partook of her nature and instincts, I should like to have never left her and to have crossed the sandy desert tied to her back. Ah! mine has indeed been a miserable youth! I still feel sick with disgust and anger when I remember the long days I passed in the room where Camille was moaning. I used to be stooping over the fire, stupidly watching the boiling of the diet-drinks, feeling my limbs stiffening. And I might not move, my aunt scolded when I made a noise. Later on I enjoyed immensely the change to the little house by the river, but I was already stultified, I could hardly walk, I fell down when I ran. Then I was buried alive in this vile shop."

Thérèse breathed hard, she clasped her lover in her arms, she was having her revenge, and her thin delicate nostrils were quivering nervously.

"You would hardly believe," she went on, "how wicked they made me. I became a hypocrite, and a liar. They stifled me with their homely kindness, and I wonder I have still so much blood left in my veins. I lowered my eyes, I made my face like theirs, dull and vacuous, I led their

lifeless existence. When you first saw me, did I not look like some animal? I was solemn, depressed, trodden down. I had no more hope in anything, I intended one day throwing myself into the Seine. But before this dejection, what nights of rage! At Vernon, in my little cold room, I bit my pillow to stifle my cries, I beat myself, I called myself a coward. My blood was on fire and I could have torn my flesh. Twice I was on the point of escaping, running straight before me to the sun; my courage failed, they had made me as docile as an animal with their enervating kindness and their loathsome tenderness. Then I became untruthful, always untruthful. I remained there so gentle and silent, yet dreaming all the while of striking and biting."

She stopped, wiping her moist lips on Laurent's neck. Then she added, after a pause :

"I don't know why I consented to marry Camille; I did not refuse, from a kind of disdainful indifference. The poor child excited my pity. When I played with him, I felt my fingers sink into his limbs as though they were lumps of clay. I took him, because my aunt offered him to me, and I never intended to disturb myself for him. And I found in my husband the little delicate boy with whom I used to sleep at six years old. He was just as frail, just as complaining, and he retained the unpleasant sickly odour which used formerly to disgust me so much. I tell you all this that you may not be jealous. A sort of repugnance rose in my throat; I thought of the drugs I had swallowed, I shrank from him, and passed terrible nights. But you, you—"

And Thérèse started up, bending back her fingers in Laurent's great hands, looking at his massive shoulders, his enormous neck.

"You, I love, I have loved you from the moment Camille pushed you into the shop. Perhaps you despise me for my entire and immediate surrender. True, I scarce know how

that happened. I am proud and passionate. I could have beaten you, the first day, when you embraced me in this room. I don't know why I loved you; I almost think I hated you. Your presence irritated me, made me suffer; when you were there, my nerves were stretched fit to break, my head felt light, I saw everything in red. Oh! how I suffered! And I sought this suffering, I longed for your coming, I hung about your chair to walk amidst your breath, to touch your clothes with mine. It seemed as if your blood blew warmly upon me as I passed, and it was this kind of ardent atmosphere in which you were enveloped, which attracted and held me to your side, in spite of my secret resistance. You remember when you were painting here: a fatal power drew me to your side, I inhaled your breath with cruel delight. I understood that I must seem begging for kisses, I was ashamed of my slavery, I felt I must fall if you touched me. But I yielded to my cowardice, I shuddered with cold while waiting for you to take me in your arms."

Then Thérèse ceased, quivering, proud, and avenged. She held Laurent intoxicated on her breast, and that bare and icy room witnessed scenes of ardent passion, of brutish licence. Their voluptuous frenzy increased with every additional meeting.

The young woman seemed to exult in audacious effrontery. She never hesitated; never feared. She flung herself into adultery with a sort of frank energy, braving peril, finding pleasure in danger. When expecting her lover, she would tell her aunt she was going upstairs to rest a little; and, when he was there, she walked about, chatted, acted openly, without once thinking of avoiding noise. Sometimes, at the beginning, Laurent grew nervous.

"Good heavens!" he would whisper to Thérèse, "don't make such a noise. Madame Raquin will come up."

"Nonsense!" she would reply, laughing, "you are

always trembling. She is glued behind her counter ; what should she come here for ? She would be too much afraid of being robbed. Besides, after all, let her come, if she likes. You can hide. She doesn't alarm me. I love you."

These words did not reassure Laurent very much. Passion had not yet lulled his sly boorish prudence. Soon, however, habit made him accept, with not overmuch terror, the dangers of these meetings in broad daylight, in Camille's bedroom, only a few steps from the old lady. His mistress told him that danger spares those who face it boldly, and she was right. Never could the lovers have found a safer retreat than this room, where no one would have dreamt of seeking them. They satisfied their lustful desires in incredible peace.

One day, however, Madame Raquin did go up, fearing her niece was ill. The young woman had been nearly three hours upstairs. She had had the audacity to leave the door which led to the dining-room unbolted.

When Laurent heard the aunt's heavy tread mounting the stairs, he was in a fright, and feverishly sought his hat and waistcoat. Thérèse began laughing at his curious expression. She took him firmly by the arm, pushed him down in a corner near the foot of the bed, and said in low quiet tones :

"Stay there, don't move."

She threw over him any garments of his that were lying about, and over the whole a white petticoat of her own which she had taken off. All this was done deftly and quickly, without any flurry. Then she lay down again, half dressed, her hair undone, still heated and quivering.

Madame Raquin gently opened the door and approached the bed with muffled tread. Her niece feigned sleep. Laurent was perspiring under the white petticoat.

"Thérèse, my child," asked the old lady, "are you ill ?"

Thérèse opened her eyes, yawned, turned away and replied in a suffering tone that her head was splitting. She besought her aunt to let her sleep a little. The old lady went off as quietly as she had come.

The two lovers, silently laughing, embraced each other with passionate violence.

"You see," said Thérèse triumphantly, "that we have nothing to fear here. All these people are blind; they are not in love."

Another day the young woman had a fantastic notion. She was sometimes almost delirious, like a mad woman. The tabby cat François was sitting on his haunches in the very middle of the room. Solemn, motionless, he fixed his round eyes on the two lovers. He seemed carefully to examine them, without lowering his lids, lost in a sort of fiendish ecstasy.

"Look at François," said Thérèse to Laurent. "One might almost fancy he understands, and is going to tell all to-night to Camille. Wouldn't it be funny if he began talking in the shop one of these days; he knows some fine tales about us."

This idea of François talking highly diverted the young woman. Laurent looked at the cat's large green eyes, and shuddered:

"This is what he would do," continued Thérèse. "He would stand up, and pointing with his paw first to me and next to you, he would exclaim: 'This lady and gentleman embrace each other considerably in the bedroom; they do not mind me, but as their guilty love disgusts me, I beg you to send them to prison; then they cannot disturb my siesta any longer.'"

Thérèse joked like a child, she imitated the cat, she stretched out her hands like claws, she gave feline undulations to her shoulders. François, sitting as motionless as

stone, continued contemplating her ; his eyes alone seemed to have life in them ; and, in the corners of his jaw, there were two deep furrows, which gave a most comical expression to this inanimate head.

Laurent felt his blood run cold. He did not enter into Thérèse's fun. He rose up and put the cat out of the room. In reality he was frightened. His mistress did not yet possess him utterly ; there still remained with him a little of the uneasiness he had felt when first he found himself in her embrace.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN the evening, down in the shop, Laurent was perfectly happy. He generally returned from the office with Camille. Madame Raquin had conceived quite a motherly affection for him; she knew he was pinched for means, living in an attic, feeding poorly, and she had told him once for all that he would always find a place laid for him at her table. She loved him with that noisy affection often shown by old women to those who come from their native place, and form a link with their past.

The young man made the most of this hospitality. On quitting the office, he and Camille would take a walk along the quays; both enjoyed this intimacy; it helped to pass the time as they chatted and strolled along. Then they returned home and partook of Madame Raquin's soup. Laurent would coolly open the shop door as though he were master; he sat astride the chairs, smoking and expectorating, and making himself at home.

Thérèse's presence did not in the least embarrass him. He treated her with rough friendliness, he joked, and paid her silly compliments without moving a muscle of his face. Camille laughed, and, as his wife only replied in monosyllables, he firmly believed they detested each other. One day he even reproached Thérèse for her coldness to his friend Laurent.

Laurent had accomplished his project: he had become the wife's lover, the husband's friend, the mother's spoilt child. Never had he been able so delightfully to satisfy all

his appetites. He basked in the rays of infinite enjoyment shed upon him by the Raquin family. Besides which, his position in this family seemed to him quite natural. He was most familiar with Camille without anger or remorse. He was not even guarded in his words or gestures, he felt such confidence in his own calm prudence; the selfishness with which he enjoyed his good fortune protected him from any mistake. In the shop, his mistress became like any other woman, whom he must not kiss and who had no existence for him. If he never embraced her before the others, it was because he feared he would never set foot in the house again. This eventuality alone stopped him; otherwise, he would have laughed at the grief of Camille and his mother. He never contemplated what might result from the discovery of his criminal intercourse. He considered he was acting simply as any other poor, starving man would have done under similar circumstances. Hence his edifying quiescence, his prudent audacity, his attitude of disinterested banter.

Thérèse, more nervous, more agitated than he, was forced to play a part. She played it to perfection, thanks to the hypocrisy implanted in her by her education. For nearly fifteen years she had deceived, stifling her cravings, appearing dull and sleepy by an effort of implacable will. It cost her little now to place over her countenance a dead, icy mask. When Laurent entered he found her serious, sulky, her nose lengthened, her lips attenuated. She was ugly, sullen, unapproachable. After all, she was exaggerating nothing. She was playing her old rôle, without arousing attention by increased abruptness. True, she felt a bitter enjoyment in deceiving Camille and Madame Raquin; she was not like Laurent, sunk in the animal enjoyment of his appetites, unmindful of duty; she knew she was doing wrong, and she had fierce longings to rise from table and

embrace Laurent on the lips, to show her husband and her aunt that she was no fool and that she had a lover.

Sometimes a flush of happiness would suffuse her ; then, excellent actress as she was, she could not resist singing when her lover was away, and she was not afraid of betraying herself. These sudden outbursts of gaiety charmed Madame Raquin, who often accused her niece of being too grave. The young woman bought pots of flowers to decorate her bedroom window ; then she had the room repapered, bought a carpet, curtains, and new violet ebony furniture. All this luxury was for Laurent.

Nature and circumstances seemed to have made this man and woman for each other, and to have thrown them together. Between them, the woman nervous and hypocritical, the man sanguine and coarse, they made a strongly united couple. They completed and protected each other. In the evening, at table, in the pale lamp-light, one felt the force of their union, looking from the thick smiling face of Laurent to Thérèse's mute, impenetrable mask.

Those were quiet, happy evenings. Friendly words rose in the silence of the cool transparent shadows. They closed in round the table ; after dessert, the talk ran on the thousand trifles of the day, the memories of yesterday, the hopes of the morrow. Camille loved Laurent as much as his selfish, satisfied nature allowed, and Laurent seemed to return his affection ; they exchanged phrases of devotion, friendly gestures and kind glances. Madame Raquin, with placid countenance, felt perfect peace among her children, and in the quiet atmosphere they breathed. One would have thought this a gathering of old acquaintances, who knew each other's hearts, and who slept peacefully in mutual faith in each other's friendship.

Thérèse, motionless, quiet like the rest, contemplated these vulgar pleasures, these smiling abstractions. And in

her heart there was wild laughter ; her whole being mocked them while her aspect was coldly rigid. She reminded herself, chuckling inwardly, that some hours before she was in the next room, half naked, on Laurent's breast ; she mentally recalled every detail of that afternoon of mad passion, she enjoyed it all again in memory, contrasting that burning scene with the lifeless reality before her eyes. Ah ! how she was deceiving these good people, and how the thought of her triumphantly audacious deceit delighted her ! And it was there, a few paces off, behind that thin partition, that she received a man ; it was there that she wallowed in his adulterous embraces. And now, at this hour, her lover became a stranger to her, a friend of her husband, a sort of stupid intruder for whom she must not care. This atrocious comedy, these deceptions in her life, this contrast between the burning kisses of the day and the acted indifference of the evening, gave a fresh impulse to the young woman's blood.

When Madame Raquin and Camille happened to go downstairs, Thérèse sprang up, fastened her lips silently, with brutish sensuality, on her lover's lips, and remained thus, panting, stifling, until steps were heard on the stairs. Then, with rapid movement, she resumed her place, and her sullen expression. Laurent, in quiet tones, continued his interrupted conversation with Camille. It was a flash of passion, rapid and blinding, in a leaden sky.

The Thursday evening was a little more animated. Laurent, who, at these gatherings, was wearied to death, made it a duty, however, not to miss one of them : prudence counselled him to be known and esteemed by Camille's friends. He had to endure the twaddle of Grivet and old Michaud ; the latter with his everlasting stories of theft and murder ; the former of his employees, his chiefs, his staff. The young man took refuge with Olivier and Suz-

anne, whose stupidity seemed a little less wearisome. Besides, he always hastened to call for the dominoes.

It was always on Thursday evening that Thérèse fixed the day and hour for their assignations. In the little confusion of departure, when Madame Raquin and Camille accompanied their guests to the front door, the young woman approached Laurent, spoke to him in a whisper, and pressed his hand. Sometimes even, when all had their backs turned, she embraced him, out of a sort of bravado.

For eight months this life of excitement and reaction lasted. The lovers lived in complete bliss; Thérèse never was wearied, never discontented now; Laurent, feasted, caressed, fatter than ever, had but one fear, that any accident should interrupt this glorious existence.

CHAPTER IX.

ONE afternoon, as Laurent was about to leave the office to visit Thérèse, who was expecting him, his chief sent for him, and told him he could not in future permit him to absent himself. He had abused their leniency. The Company had decided to dismiss him if he went out again during office hours.

Glued to his stool, he was in despair until it was time to leave. He must keep his situation ; he could not afford to lose it. In the evening he was tortured by Thérèse's annoyed expression. He did not know how to explain his absence to his mistress. While Camille was closing the shop, he approached her quickly :

"We cannot have any more meetings," said he, in a low voice. "My chief refuses me any further leave of absence."

Camille came back. Laurent had to go without explaining more, leaving Thérèse aghast at this sudden information. Exasperated, unwilling to admit that anyone could trouble her amours, she passed a sleepless night, building impossible plans for interviews. The following Thursday procured her only a minute's speech with Laurent. Their anxiety was heightened by their ignorance of a safe meeting-place for consultation and explanation. The young woman made another appointment with her lover, and he disappointed her a second time. From that moment she had but one fixed idea—to see him at all hazards.

For a fortnight Laurent had been unable to see Thérèse

alone. Then he felt how necessary this woman had become to him; the habit of embracing her had created new appetites, ~~acutely exacting~~. He no longer felt uneasy in his mistress's arms; he sought her caresses with the pertinacity of a hungry animal. A sanguine passion had developed in his muscles. Now that his mistress was separated from him, this passion declared itself with blind violence; he loved furiously. Conscience held no sway in this brutish nature; he obeyed his instincts; he followed the promptings of his organism. He would have gone into fits of laughter a year before if he had been told he would become the slave of a woman, to the extent of disturbing his own ease. His animal passions had been secretly at work unbeknown to him, and had ended by casting him, bound hand and foot, as a prey to Thérèse's fierce caresses. Now he dreaded he might forget his usual prudence; he did not dare to come in the evening to the Passage du Pont-Neuf, for fear of doing something foolish. He was no longer master of his actions. His mistress, with her feline grace, her nervous flexibility, had insinuated herself into every fibre of his frame. He required this woman to enable him to live, as one requires to drink, to eat.

He would certainly have done something rash had he not received a letter from Thérèse, advising him to stay at home the following day. His mistress promised to come and see him about eight o'clock in the evening.

On leaving the office, he got rid of Camille, with the excuse of being tired and wanting to go at once to bed. Thérèse, after dinner, also played her part. She spoke of a customer who had removed from the neighbourhood without paying her bill, and she acted the harsh creditor, announcing her intention of going to try and get her money. The customer was now living at Batignolles. Madame Raquin and Camille considered the journey too long for her, and the

result doubtful ; however, they made no further demur, and let Thérèse go without any misgivings.

The young women hurried off to the Port-aux-Vins, slipping on the greasy pavement, jostling the passers-by in her haste to arrive. Her face became wet with perspiration ; her hands were burning. She seemed like a drunken woman. She quickly mounted the stairs of the lodging-house. On the sixth storey, panting, with wild looks, she perceived Laurent, leaning over the banisters, awaiting her.

She entered the attic. Her ample skirts had hardly room enough in the narrow space. She tore off her bonnet with one hand, and leant half fainting against the bed. The skylight window, wide open, admitted the fresh evening air on to the burning couch. The lovers remained long in the wretched garret as in a snug hole. Suddenly Thérèse heard the clock of the Église de la Pitié strike ten. She would willingly have been deaf. She rose up painfully and examined this attic which she had not before noticed. She put on her bonnet, tied the strings, and said slowly, as she sat down :

“I must go.”

Laurent was now on his knees before her. He took her hands.

“Good-bye,” said she without moving.

“No, not only good-bye,” cried he, “that is not sufficient. What day will you return ?”

She looked him in the face.

“You wish to know the truth ?” said she. “Well ! really, I don’t think I shall ever return. I have no pretext, I can invent none.”

“Then, we must say farewell.”

“No, I cannot ! I will not !”

She spoke these words in frightened, angry tones She

added, more quietly, without knowing what she said, without rising from her chair :

“I am going.”

Laurent pondered. His thoughts were of Camille.

“I have nothing to say against him,” said he at last, without naming him ; “but he is really a great nuisance to us. Could you not get rid of him, send him somewhere on a very long journey ?”

“Oh ! yes, on a journey !” replied the young woman, tossing her head. “You think a man like that would consent to travel. There is but one journey from which there is no return. But he will live to bury us all ; such weaklings never die.”

A pause ensued. Laurent crawled on his knees, pressing against his mistress, laying his head on her bosom.

“I have often dreamed,” said he, “of passing the whole night with you, of falling asleep in your arms, and of awaking in the morning beneath your kisses. I would like to be your husband. You understand ?”

“Yes, yes,” replied Thérèse, shivering.

And she suddenly bent over Laurent’s face which she covered with kisses. She rubbed her bonnet strings against his rough beard ; she forgot she was dressed and that she was crumpling her clothes. She sobbed, she panted out words in the midst of her tears.

“Do not say such things,” she cried, “or I shall not have strength to leave you, I shall be unable to tear myself away. Give me courage instead ; tell me we shall meet again. Am I not necessary to you, and shall we not some day find the means of living together ?”

“Well then, come again, come to-morrow,” replied Laurent, whose trembling arms encircled her waist.

“But I cannot come. I told you so, I have no pretext.” She twisted her arms about. She went on :

“ Oh ! it is not the scandal that alarms me. When I go home I will, if you wish, tell Camille that you are my lover, and I will come back and sleep here. It is for you I tremble ; I do not wish to disturb your life, I wish to make it happy.”

The young man's prudent instincts were aroused.

“ You are right,” said he, “ we must not act like children. Ah ! if only your husband were to die.”

“ If my husband were to die,” repeated Thérèse slowly.

“ We could marry each other, we should then have nothing to fear, we should revel in love. What a happy and delightful existence ! ”

The young woman rose up. With pale cheeks, she gazed darkly at her lover ; her lips quivered.

“ People die sometimes,” she murmured, at last. “ Only it is dangerous for the survivors.”

Laurent was silent.

“ You see,” she continued, “ all the known means are faulty.”

“ You have misunderstood me,” said he quietly. “ I am not a fool, I want to love you in peace. I was only thinking accidents happen every day, the foot may slip, a tile may fall. You understand ? In the latter case, the wind alone is to blame.”

His voice was strange. He smiled and added caressingly :

“ Now, go love, and make your mind easy, we will live and be happy. As you cannot come, leave it to me. If we are months without a meeting, remember that I am working for our future bliss.”

He pressed Thérèse to his heart, and she opened the door to go.

“ You are mine, mine alone ? ” he asked. “ Swear to give yourself wholly to me at any moment that I may claim you.”

“Yes,” cried the young woman, “I am yours; do with me what you will.”

They remained a moment wild but yet silent. Then Thérèse abruptly tore herself away, and, without turning her head, left the attic and went downstairs. Laurent listened to her retreating footsteps.

When all was still, he returned to his room and got into bed. The sheets were warm. He was stifling in this narrow hole which Thérèse had left full of the ardour of her passion. He seemed still inhaling her breath; she had been there, shedding penetrating emanations, a scent of violets, and now he could only clasp in his arms the shadowy phantom of his mistress as it hung about him; he felt the fever of rekindled and unsatisfied desire. He did not close the window. Lying flat on his back, with bare arms and outspread hands, seeking coolness, he meditated, gazing the while on the square of dark blue which the window frame cut out of the sky.

Till dawn of day, the same idea revolved in his head. Before Thérèse's visit, he had not contemplated killing Camille; he had spoken of the young man's death, moved by circumstances, irritated at the thought of separation from his mistress. Thus was revealed a new phase of his unbridled nature: he began to dream of murder in the intoxication of his adultery.

Now, grown calm, alone in the middle of the quiet night, his thoughts were bent on killing. The idea of death, suggested to him as a last resource, between two burning kisses, returned implacable and persistent. Laurent, shaken by sleeplessness, enervated by the pungent odours Thérèse had left behind her, planned ambushes, calculated accidents, discovered the advantages he would derive from being an assassin.

All his self-interest urged him to the crime. He told

himself that his father, the peasant at Jeufosse, was not thinking of dying yet; he might have to remain a clerk another ten years, dining meanly at a cheap eating-house, living up in a garret, without a wife. This prospect exasperated him. On the other hand, Camille dead, he would marry Thérèse, become Madame Raquin's heir, leave the office and bask in the sun. Then he pleased his fancy with a vision of this idle life, doing nothing but eat and sleep whilst patiently awaiting his father's death. And when his dream melted into reality, he found Camille in his path, he clinched his fists as if to fell him with a blow.

Laurent wanted Thérèse; he wanted to have her always within reach, and for himself alone. If he did not get rid of the husband, the wife would never be his. She had told him she could not return. He would willingly have carried her off, out of reach, but then they would both have starved. The lesser risk would be to kill the husband; no scandal need ensue, he only removed a man to take his place. In his boorish selfishness he considered this measure excellent and natural. His native prudence even counselled this rapid expedient.

He tossed about on his bed, all in a perspiration, turning on his damp face, pressing it to the pillow that had supported Thérèse's dishevelled tresses. He took the sheet between his parched lips, he inhaled the light perfume still pervading it, and he lay there, panting, half smothered, seeing bars of fire pass along his closed eyelids. He asked himself how he could best kill Camille. Then, when his breath failed, he bounded over on his back, and, with dilated eyes, receiving full in the face the cold air from the window, he sought in the stars, in the dark blue square of sky, a method of murder, a plan of assassination.

He found none. As he had told his mistress, he was neither a child nor a fool; he would not touch either dagger

or poison. He must commit a sly secret crime, accomplished without danger, a diabolical suffocation, without noise, without shock, a simple disappearance. In vain did passion rouse him and urge him on; his whole being imperiously demanded caution. He was too cowardly, too voluptuous, to risk his tranquillity. He would kill, but only to ensure a calm and happy existence.

Gradually sleep overpowered him. The fresh air had exorcised Thérèse's warm and fragrant phantom. Laurent, weary, appeased, yielded himself up to a quiet dreamy torpor. As he fell asleep, he decided that he would await a favourable opportunity, and his thoughts, growing more and more indistinct, rocked him off to the refrain: "I will kill him, I will kill him." Five minutes later, he was unconscious, breathing with serene regularity.

Thérèse arrived home at eleven o'clock, her head on fire, her mind on the strain. She arrived at the Passage du Pont-Neuf unconscious of the road she had traversed. She seemed to have just left Laurent, so filled were her ears with the words he had spoken. She found Madame Raquin and Camille anxious and full of kind attention; she replied curtly to their questions, saying she had had all her trouble for nothing, and had been kept waiting a full hour for an omnibus.

When she went to bed, she found the sheets cold and damp. Her limbs, still burning, shuddered with repugnance. Camille was not long in falling asleep, and Thérèse gazed and gazed at that leaden-hued face resting stupidly, with open mouth, on the pillow. She drew away from him, she felt a longing to cram her clinched fist into that mouth.



THÉRÈSE WATCHING CAMILLE ASLEEP.



CHAPTER X.

NEARLY three weeks had passed. Laurent called at the shop every evening ; he seemed wearied, as though by illness ; he had pale bluish rings round his eyes ; his lips were discoloured and swollen. But his apathy was unchanged ; he still looked Camille full in the face—he still manifested the same blunt friendship towards him. Madame Raquin petted her son's friend all the more since she became aware of the latent fever which seemed to be wasting him.

Thérèse had resumed her mute and surly expression. She was more motionless, more impenetrable, more docile than ever. Laurent might not be in existence as far as she was concerned ; she hardly looked at him, spoke to him but seldom, treated him with the most complete indifference. Madame Raquin, whose kindly nature was pained by such conduct, would often say to the young man :

“Don't take any notice of my niece's coldness. I know her thoroughly ; she seems cold enough outwardly, but she has a warm heart. She is the tenderest, the most devoted girl in the world.”

The lovers had no more stolen interviews. Since the night in the Rue Saint-Victor, they had never again met in private. In the evenings, sitting opposite to each other, to all appearance composed and utter strangers to each other's thoughts, a flood of passion, of terror, and of lust, was boiling behind the calm faces of both. And Thérèse gave way to fits of anger, to unkind acts, and cruel remarks ; while Laurent showed every now and then some trace of his brutish

nature, of his painful indecision. They themselves did not dare to sound the depths of their own hearts, or to venture among the rank fumes of the evil thoughts which filled their minds.

When they had a chance, behind some door, they would silently squeeze each other's hands, almost hard enough to crush them, with a rough swift grip. They would both have been glad if the other's flesh could have adhered to their burning fingers. That pressure of the hands was the only caress they had left to appease their desires. Into it they condensed their whole being. They asked each other for no more. They were waiting.

One Thursday evening, before sitting down to their game, the guests of the Raquin establishment had as usual a little chat. One of their chief topics was the former profession of old Michaud; they would get him to tell the story of the adventures—blood-curdling or extraordinary—in which he had played a part. Then Grivet and Camille would listen to the ex-commissary of police, with gaping mouth and hair on end, like children hearing "Blue Beard" or "Tom Thumb" for the first time. It frightened them, and it amused them.

That particular day, Michaud, who had been giving them the account of a horrible murder, with an elaboration of detail that made them shudder, concluded, shaking his head as he spoke :

"And, after all, there is a lot that we shall never know. How many crimes there are which never come to light! How many murderers escape human justice!"

"What!" cried Grivet, in astonishment, "do you mean to say that you believe that there are villains walking about in the street, like anybody else, who have committed murders, and who are not arrested."

Olivier smiled with a disdainful air.

“My dear sir,” he answered in his pedantic voice, “if they are not arrested, it is because it is not known that they have committed a murder.”

Grivet did not seem convinced by this argument. Camille came to his help.

“For my part, I agree with Monsieur Grivet,” he said, with all the importance of his stupidity. “I prefer to believe that the police do their duty, and that I shall never be jostled by a murderer in the street.”

Olivier interpreted these words into a personal attack.

“Of course the police does its duty,” he exclaimed with some irritation. “But we can’t do what is impossible. There are some villains who have studied crime in the devil’s own academy; the Archangel Michael himself could not catch them. Don’t you think so, father?”

“Why, yes,” agreed old Michaud. “It so happens that when I was at Vernon—you will perhaps remember the case, Madame Raquin—a waggoner was murdered on the high road. The body was found in a ditch, cut to pieces. The murderer has not been caught yet. He may be alive to this day; he may be a neighbour of ours; and perhaps Monsieur Grivet will meet him on his way home.”

Grivet turned as white as a sheet. He hardly dared look over his shoulder for fear he should see the waggoner’s murderer standing behind him. Besides, he enjoyed having been so thoroughly frightened.

“Oh, come now,” he stammered, scarcely knowing what he was saying—“oh, come now, I’m not going to believe that. Besides, I can give you a case in point. A servant was once sent to prison for having stolen a silver dish from her master. Two months afterwards, as they were felling a tree, the dish was found in a magpie’s nest. The thief was a magpie. The servant was released immediately. So you

see that, in the long run, the guilty one will always be brought to book."

Grivet looked round triumphantly. Olivier was on the broad grin.

"Of course," he said, "they locked up the magpie?"

"That is not the point of Monsieur Grivet's argument," retorted Camille, who objected to his chief being chaffed. "Mother, give us the dominoes."

While Madame Raquin went to look for the box, the young man continued, addressing himself to Michaud:

"So you confess now—the police is powerless, isn't it? There *are* murderers walking about in broad daylight?"

"Well, I'm afraid there *are*, worse luck!" answered the commissary.

"I declare," concluded Grivet, "it's positively—*immoral!*"

During this conversation Thérèse and Laurent had not said a word. They had not even smiled at Grivet's nonsense. Both leaning forward on their elbows, both rather pale, they were listening with a dull stare.

Once their eyes met, black and burning like coals. And little beads of perspiration appeared at the roots of Thérèse's hair, and Laurent shuddered slightly once or twice as with a cold chill.

CHAPTER XI.

SOMETIMES on Sundays, when the weather was fine, Camille would oblige Thérèse to come out with him for a walk in the Champs-Élysées. The young woman would have preferred to remain within the damp shade of the shop; it tired her, it bored her to be dragged along the streets on her husband's arm, while every other shop brought him to a standstill, and gave him food for astonishment, or reflection, or idiotic contemplation. But Camille would have his way; he liked to show his wife about; whenever he met any of the clerks from the office, particularly any of his superiors, he was delighted to be able, in the company of "Madame," to exchange a greeting with them. Besides, he was accustomed to walk for walking's sake, hardly speaking a word, stiff and awkward in his Sunday clothes, dragging one foot after another, boorish and conceited. Thérèse suffered greatly at being arm-in-arm with such a man.

On these occasions, Madame Raquin invariably escorted her children to the end of the Passage, and kissed them as if they were starting on a journey. And then there was always a whole series of bits of advice and of earnest entreaties.

"Above all," she would say, "mind you don't get run over. There are so many vehicles in this blessed Paris! Promise me you will keep out of the crowd!"

And at last she would let them get away, and stand watching them until they turned the corner. Then only she would go back into the shop. Any long walk was out

of the question for her, as her legs were beginning to fail her.

At other times, though not so often, the young couple would go further afield; they went to Saint-Ouen or Asnières, and had some fried fish at one of the water-side restaurants. These were looked upon as days of reckless extravagance, and formed the subject of conversation for a whole month beforehand. It was with a better grace, almost with pleasure, that Thérèse would agree to be treated to such excursions as these; for did they not keep her out in the fresh air until ten or eleven o'clock at night? Saint-Ouen, with its green islands, reminded her of Vernon; it roused in her once again the instinctive affection which, as a child, she had had for the Seine. She would sit on the bank, dipping her hand into the river, and feeling herself revive in the heat of the sun which was tempered by the fresh summer breeze. While she was heedlessly soiling and tearing her dress upon the stones and the wet earth, Camille would spread out his pocket-handkerchief neatly, and squat down at her side with infinite precaution. Latterly they almost always took Laurent with them; and, with his laughter and boorish strength, he was the life and soul of the party.

One Sunday Camille, Thérèse and Laurent, started for Saint-Ouen after breakfast, at about eleven o'clock. This excursion had been planned a long time, and it was to be the last of the season. They were getting well into autumn, and the evenings were becoming chilly with the approach of winter.

That morning, however, the sky had lost none of its summer blue. It was warm in the sun and pleasant in the shade; and so they decided to take advantage of the last of the fine weather.

The three merry-makers departed in a cab, with the old

lady's doleful warnings and anxious recommendations ringing in their ears. They drove across Paris and dismissed the cab at the fortifications ; then they made their way to Saint-Ouen along the high road. It was twelve o'clock. The path was covered with dust and, in the hot glare of the sun, dazzled the eyes like the whiteness of snow. The air was heavy with heat. Thérèse, arm-in-arm with Camille, was walking along languidly in the shade of her parasol ; while he was fanning himself with a huge pocket-handkerchief. Behind them came Laurent, whose neck the sun was roasting without any apparent inconvenience to him ; he was whistling, kicking aside the stray stones, and now and then watching the shapely figure of his mistress with flashing eyes.

When they arrived at Saint-Ouen, their first thought was where to find a clump of trees—a grassy carpet spread in the shade. They crossed over to an island and entered a coppice. The fallen leaves covered the ground with a ruddy mantle which crackled under the feet with a dry rustling. The trunks of the trees shot up towards the sky, straight and serried as the columns in a Gothic cathedral ; their branches trailed down almost to the excursionists' heads, whose horizon was thus bounded by the bronzed arches of dying leaves, and the black or white stems of aspen and oak. It was a wild, melancholy spot, a quiet cool glade, and all around them they heard the splashing of the Seine.

Camille had picked out a dry place, and had sat himself down, taking great care not to injure the tails of his coat. Thérèse had subsided among the leaves with a great rustling of skirts ; she was almost hidden by the folds of her dress which were billowing about her, and displaying one of her legs as high as the knee. Laurent was admiring it at his ease, lying full length on the ground, his chin buried in the earth, and listening to his friend who was grumbling at the

Government for not turning all the islands of the Seine into pleasure-gardens, with seats, and gravelled walks, and clipped trees, the same as at the Tuileries.

They remained about three hours in the glade, waiting until the heat of the sun should abate a little, when they could explore the neighbourhood before dinner. Camille talked a good deal about his office ; he told several stupid stories ; and then, tired out, he let himself sink back and went to sleep, having previously placed his hat over his eyes. Long before this Thérèse, with closed lids, was pretending to doze.

Then Laurent wriggled himself gently up to the young woman ; and, putting forth his lips, kissed her boot and her ankle. And this leather, this white stocking that he was kissing, seemed to burn his mouth. The sharp odours of the earth, the light perfumes clinging to Thérèse mingled together and penetrated him, heating his blood, and irritating his nerves. For a whole month he had been living in a state of fuming celibacy. The walk in the sun, along the high road to Saint-Ouen, had kindled a fire within him. Now he was there, in the depths of an unfrequented retreat, surrounded by the great voluptuousness of shade and silence, and yet he was unable to clasp to his breast this woman who belonged to him ! Perhaps her husband would awake, would see him, would upset all his astute calculations. This man was always in the way. And the lover, still stretched at full length, hidden behind the skirts, quivering and irritated, pressed silent kisses upon the boot and the white stocking. Thérèse never moved ; she might have been dead. Laurent thought she really was asleep.

He rose, aching in every limb, and leant against a tree. Then he saw that the young woman's great eyes were wide open, glittering, and fixed on vacancy. Her face, resting between her two arms bent back under her head, was white

with a dull pallor, and rigid as marble. Thérèse was deep in thought. Her glassy eyes were like some fathomless abyss where nothing but blackest night was to be seen. She never moved, she never gave a glance at Laurent standing behind her.

Her lover gazed upon her, almost alarmed at seeing her so motionless and so silent beneath his caresses. That white, lifeless face, buried in the folds of the skirts, filled him with a sort of terror for all the passion it aroused. He would have liked to bend forward, and close those great wakeful eyes with a kiss. But Camille was asleep there, almost in the skirts also. The poor creature, in an uneasy attitude which brought out all his bodily defects, was snoring a little ; under the hat, which half covered his face, you could see his open mouth distorted by some dream into a ridiculous grimace ; a few red hairs, scantily sprinkled over his weak chin, gave a dirtier hue to his sallow face, and, as his head was well thrown back, his thin wrinkled neck was in full view, with a prominent and ruddy Adam's apple which heaved at every snore. Camille's appearance as he lay wallowing there was ignoble and irritating.

Laurent, who was looking at him, raised his heel with a sudden impulse. He was about to smash in that face at one blow.

Thérèse repressed a scream. She turned still paler, and shut her eyes. She averted her head, as though to avoid being splashed with the blood.

And, during some moments, Laurent kept his heel raised over the face of sleeping Camille. Then slowly he put his foot to the ground and moved a few yards away. He had just decided that such a murder would be the act of an idiot. That battered head would put the police on his track at once. His only reason for wanting to get rid of Camille was to marry Thérèse ; and he intended to live openly after the

murder like the man who killed the waggoner in Michaud's story.

He went as far as the waterside, and watched the river flowing past with a dazed look. Then suddenly he returned into the coppice ; he had at last decided on a plan ; he had invented an easy murder, and one without danger to himself.

Then he awoke the sleeper by tickling his nose with a straw. Camille sneezed, got up, and vowed it was awfully funny. He liked Laurent's practical jokes, they made him laugh so. Then he shook his wife, who was keeping her eyes shut ; and when Thérèse had roused herself, and shaken out her skirts, which were tumbled and covered with dry leaves, the three excursionists emerged from the glade, breaking the little branches before them. They left the island, and wandered along the roads and lanes full of holiday folk. Girls in light dresses were chasing each other along the hedges ; a troop of rowing men passed by singing ; crowds of happy couples, of old people, and of clerks with their wives, were strolling along by the flower-dotted ditches. Every road was like a thickly-populated and noisy street. The sun's was the only face that maintained its composure ; it was sinking towards the horizon and shedding upon the ruddy trees and the white highways a flood of pallid light. From the quivering heavens a cool penetrating air was beginning to descend.

Camille was no longer walking arm-in-arm with Thérèse ; he was talking to Laurent, laughing at his friend's jokes and feats of strength, such as leaping ditches and lifting heavy stones. The young woman, on the other side of the road, was plodding on, with her head bent forward, sometimes stooping to pick a flower. Whenever she dropped behind she would stop and take a long look at her lover and her husband.

“ I say, aren't you hungry ? ” cried Camille to her at last.

“ Yes, ” she replied.

“ Well, come along, then ! ”

Thérèse was not hungry ; she was only tired and anxious. She had no clue to what was passing in Laurent's mind, and her legs were trembling under her with apprehension.

The three excursionists came back to the water-side, and looked out for a restaurant. They selected a table on a sort of platform-terrace, in an eating-house that reeked of cooking and drink. The place re-echoed with screams, with choruses, with the rattle of crockery ; in every room, public and private, there were people talking at the top of their voice, and the thin partitions gave the fullest scope to all this noise ; while the waiters running up and down made the staircase shake again.

Up above, on the terrace, the river-breeze dispelled the smell of grease. Thérèse was leaning against the balustrade and looking down at the quay. To the right and left extended two rows of drinking-shops and booths ; under the arbours, among the scanty yellow foliage, you could see the white tablecloths, the black coats of the men, and the gay dresses of the women ; people were coming and going, bare-headed, running and laughing ; and with the uproar of the crowd were blended the dolorous tunes of the barrel-organs. A smell of fried fish and dust pervaded the calm air.

Below Thérèse, some girls from the Quartier-Latin were dancing in a ring on the trodden grass-plot to the words of a nursery rhyme. With their hats dangling over their shoulders, their hair flying loose, and holding each other by the hand, they were playing like little children. Their voices seemed to have regained a touch of freshness, and a maidenly blush suffused their pale cheeks—which bore the traces of brutish caresses—with a tender rose. An unwonted diffidence softened the fire of their bold, big eyes. Some

students, smoking clay pipes, were watching them as they danced and cracked coarse jokes about them.

And beyond, over the Seine, over the distant hills, the sweetness of eventide was falling in a bluish impalpable mist which hung about the trees in a transparent haze.

“Well!” cried Laurent leaning over the banisters on the staircase, “how about dinner, waiter?”

And then—as if with a happy thought—he added :

“I say, Camille, supposing we went for a row before dining? That will give them time to roast a chicken for us. It would be a bore to stop here an hour waiting for it.”

“Just as you please,” answered Camille, carelessly. “But Thérèse is hungry.”

“No, no, I can wait,” hastily put in the young woman, upon whom Laurent was fixing his eyes.

All three of them went down again. As they passed the counter they engaged a table, they ordered the dinner, and they left word that they would be back in an hour’s time. As the landlord had boats to let, they asked him to come and unmoor one. Laurent chose an outrigger of such light build that Camille took fright.

“The deuce!” he said, “we mustn’t move about too much in that cockle-shell. We should get a soaking.”

The fact was that Camille was awfully afraid of the water. At Vernon, when he was a boy, his many ailments prevented him from taking a dip in the Seine; and, while his school-fellows were off for a swim in deep water, he would be getting between two hot blankets. Laurent had become a bold swimmer, and a first-rate oar; Camille had never lost that horror of being out of his depth that is common to women and children. He touched the end of the boat with his foot as though doubtful of its stability.

“Come, get in,” laughed Laurent. “You are always so nervous.”

Camille stepped over the side, and stumblingly went and sat down in the stern. When he felt the boards beneath him he began to take his ease and to joke to prove his courage.

Thérèse had remained on the bank and, grave and motionless, was standing at the side of her lover who was holding the painter. He bent towards her and, in low, hurried tones :

“Look out,” he murmured, “I’m going to chuck him into the water. Do as I tell you. I’ll be answerable for everything.”

The young woman turned horribly pale. She stood as if rooted to the earth. She grew quite stiff, her eyes wide open.

“Get into the boat, can’t you ?” repeated Laurent.

She did not move. A terrible struggle was going on within her. She had to exercise all her strength of will in order not to burst out crying or swoon away.

“Ha ! ha !” laughed Camille. “Why, Laurent, just look at Thérèse ! It’s she who’s afraid ! She will—she won’t ! She will—she won’t !”

He had stretched himself out in the stern-sheets, resting his elbows on the gunwale, and was trying to look quite at home. Thérèse gave him a strange glance. This poor fellow’s giggle stung her like a whip-lash, and drove her to desperation. She suddenly sprang into the boat, and sat down in the bows. Laurent took the oars, and, rowing slowly, made for the islands.

It was becoming twilight. The trees were casting great shadows, and the stream flowed as black as ink against the banks. In the middle of the river there were long streaks of pale silvery light. Very soon the boat had reached mid-channel. There, all the clamour of the quay died away ; the choruses and the shouting sounded vague and melancholy,

full of a languishing sadness. The smell of dust and fried fish was no longer perceptible. The night air was chilly; it was getting quite cold.

Laurent stopped rowing, and allowed the boat to drift with the current.

Opposite him rose the ruddy mass of islands. The two banks, clad in sombre brown flaked with grey, seemed like two broad belts which stretched and met in the far distance. The water and the sky were of the same leaden hue. There is nothing more painfully calm than an autumn twilight. The sun's rays turn pale in the shivering air; the senile trees shed their leaves about them. Burnt up by the hot glare of summer, the whole country side feels the impending death of its beauty in every cold wind. And in the breeze you can hear piteous sighs of despair. Then night descends from on high with its shroud-laden shadow.

The excursionists spoke never a word. From the drifting boat they were watching the last gleams of light vanishing among the foliage. They were nearing the islands. The big ruddy clumps were darkening; the whole landscape was becoming blurred in the twilight; the Seine, the sky, the islands, the hills, were by this time nothing more than patches of brown and grey, fast disappearing in the midst of a dull white mist.

Camille, who had subsided in the bottom of the boat, with his head craned over the side, fell to dipping his hands in the stream.

"Gad! it's cold enough!" he cried; "I shouldn't care about taking a header into that bowl of broth!"

Laurent vouchsafed no answer. For the last minute or so he had been anxiously scanning the two banks, he was gripping his knees with both hands, and his lips were tightly compressed. Thérèse, erect and motionless, her head slightly thrown back, was waiting.

The boat was drifting into a narrow branch of the river between two islands, deep in the shadow. Behind one of these islands, the voices of some rowing-men who were going up the river, resounded through the still air, mellowed by their surroundings. As far as one could see ahead, the Seine was deserted.

Then Laurent got up, and twined his arms about Camille's waist. The clerk burst out laughing.

"Oh, don't! you're tickling me," he cried. "None of your larks! Come, chuck it up! You'll send me overboard."

Laurent tightened his grip, and gave a jerk. Camille turned his head, and caught sight of his friend's terrible features, all convulsed. He could not make it out; a vague terror came over him. He would have screamed, but he felt a rough hand at his throat. With the instinct of an animal on the defensive, he got on to his knees and clutched at the boat's gunwale. In this position, he carried on the struggle for a few seconds.

"Thérèse! Thérèse!" he screamed at last in a choked and hissing voice.

The young woman was looking on, both hands clutching one of the seats of the wherry, which was pitching and creaking on the water. She was unable to close her eyes; a frightful fascination kept them wide open, fixed upon the ghastly sight of the struggle. She was petrified—speechless.

"Thérèse! Thérèse!" again yelled the poor wretch in his death-rattle.

At this last appeal Thérèse burst into sobs. Her nerves were unstrung. In the presence of the crisis she had been dreading, she dropped down into the bottom of the boat, trembling in every limb. There she remained in a heap, swooned away, like a corpse.

Laurent was still struggling with Camille, with one hand at his throat. At last, he managed to shake loose his hold

with the help of his other hand. He held him up in his powerful arms as he might a child. As he bent his head towards him, he exposed his neck, and his victim, mad with rage and terror, twisted himself round and fixed his teeth in it. And when the murderer, smothering a howl of pain, suddenly hurled the clerk into the river, those teeth carried away a piece of his flesh between them.

Camille sank with a yell. He came up two or three times ; but his cries grew fainter and fainter.

Laurent did not lose a moment. He raised the collar of his coat to conceal his wound. Then he caught up the unconscious Thérèse in his arms, capsized the boat with one heavy lurch, and let himself fall into the Seine with his mistress. He held her above water, and called for help with a dolorous voice.

The rowers, whose choruses he had heard from the other side of the island, came up at full speed. They understood that an accident had happened ; they fished out Thérèse, and laid her on a seat ; they helped in Laurent, who fell to bewailing his friend's fate. He leapt back into the water ; he hunted for Camille wherever it was impossible to find him, he got in again, weeping bitterly, wringing his hands, tearing his hair. The crew tried to calm him, to comfort him.

"It's all my fault," he howled ; "I oughtn't to have allowed the poor fellow to dance about and play the fool like that. Of course the minute we all happened to be on one side of the boat—over we went ! His last words as he sank were, 'Save my wife !'"

As is always the case at any accident, two or three of the new-comers would have it that they were eye-witnesses of the cocurrence.

"We saw the whole affair," said they. "What can you expect, a boat isn't the floor of a room ! Poor little woman—what a terrible awakening she will have !"

They took the wherry in tow, made play with their oars, and brought Thérèse and Laurent back to the restaurant, where dinner was ready and waiting. Every detail of the accident was known in Saint-Ouen within five minutes. The salvage crew spoke as though they had been eye-witnesses of the whole affair. A sympathizing crowd swarmed outside the eating-house.

The landlord and his wife were a couple of good souls, who soon supplied their half-drowned guests with dry clothing. When Thérèse recovered from her swoon, she had an attack of hysteria, and burst into agonizing sobs ; they had to put her to bed. Nature was assisting the diabolical comedy that had just been performed.

When the young woman had grown calmer, Laurent left her in charge of the host. He wanted to get back to Paris alone, in order to break the dreadful news to Madame Raquin as carefully as possible. The truth of it was that Thérèse's nervous state alarmed him. He preferred to give her time to think over it all, and to study her rôle.

Camille's dinner was eaten by the rowing-men.

CHAPTER XII.

IN his dark corner of the public conveyance that brought him back to Paris, Laurent was able to elaborate his plans. He was almost certain of the most absolute impunity. He was full of a dark and yet apprehensive feeling of relief—relief at the successful issue of his crime. When he reached the Barrière de Clichy, he called a cab, and told the man to drive to old Michaud's place, in the Rue de Seine. It was nine o'clock.

The ex-commissary of police was at dinner with Olivier and Suzanne. Laurent's object in driving there was to secure the old man's influence in the event of suspicion being aroused, and to avoid the disagreeable necessity of having himself to break the news to Madame Raquin. Such a task would, under the circumstances, be more than usually irksome to him ; he felt sure that the news would plunge her into such a depth of despair that perhaps even he might not be able to convince her of the sincerity of his regret ; besides, although it did not matter much to him after all, the sight of a mother's sorrow would be a deuce of a bore.

When Michaud saw him come in, dressed in common, ill-fitting clothes, he looked at him inquiringly. Laurent told them all about the accident, in broken accents, and as might one utterly wearied out and grief-stricken.

"I come to you," he concluded, "as I didn't know what to do with those two poor women who have been so cruelly bereaved. I haven't the courage to see his mother alone. I beg you to come with me."

While he was talking, Olivier was fixing his eyes upon him, with a searching look that frightened him out of his wits. As a matter of fact, the murderer had ventured to put his head into the very jaws of the police with an audacity which could not but hold him harmless. But, as he felt their eyes upon him, he could not help shuddering ; where there was only compassion and horror, he could not help seeing suspicion. Suzaune, who looked paler and weaker than ever, seemed as if she were going to faint. Olivier, who dreaded the very idea of death, but who, by-the-way, was a most cold-blooded mortal, put on a face of sorrowing surprise, although from force of habit he was subjecting Laurent to a professional scrutiny, without, however, having the least inkling of the black truth. As for old Michaud, he gave full vent to all his feelings of astonishment, of pity, and of alarm. He could not sit still on his chair ; he could do nothing but clasp his hands and raise his eyes to heaven.

“ Good God ! ” he kept saying in a husky voice. “ Good God ! what an awful thing ! A man goes out, and he dies like that, all on a sudden ! It’s simply dreadful. And poor Madame Raquin, his mother, how shall we break it to her ? You certainly could not have done better than to come for us. We will go there with you.”

He got up, walked to and fro, hunted all over the room for his hat and stick ; and, all the while, he was making Laurent repeat every detail of the catastrophe, and stopping him every minute with exclamations of horror.

All four went downstairs. When they got to the Passage du Pont-Neuf, Michaud stopped Laurent.

“ Don’t you come in,” he said ; “ your presence alone would tell the whole story, and that is exactly what we want to avoid. The unhappy mother would at once suspect that there was something wrong, and she would compel us to

bring out the truth sooner than would be good for her. Wait for us here."

This was an arrangement which just suited the murderer, who shuddered at the bare idea of walking into the shop. He regained his coolness, he strolled up and down and made his way to and fro without interference. Every now and then he forgot what had just happened; he looked into the shops, whistled some old tune, or turned round to look after the women who passed. And thus he whiled away a good half-hour in the street, and gradually recovered his composure.

He had not tasted food since morning; finding that he was hungry, he went into a confectioner's and stuffed himself with cakes.

In the shop in the Passage, a very painful scene was taking place. Notwithstanding old Michaud's precautions, and his gentle and friendly words, Madame Raquin was not long in coming to the conclusion that some accident had happened to her son. From that moment she insisted upon the whole truth with such a deluge of tears, such a succession of screams, such a madness of despair, that her old friend gave way to her appeal. And when she had heard the truth her grief was a very tragedy. Sobbing silently, falling back in shudders of horror, in fits of alternate misery and affright, she lay there almost choking, screaming out ever and anon in the profound agony of her grief. She would have flung herself on the floor if Suzanne—who, weeping on her knees, was gazing at her with a pale face—had not caught her round the waist. Olivier and his father, both silent and upset, were still standing, turning away their heads from a disagreeable sight which did not in any way concern them.

And the poor mother could see the muddy flood of the Seine whirling along her son's stiff and swollen corpse; she

could remember him a baby in his cradle, when she had to stand between him and death. It seemed to her that his ailments gave her ten times the privileges of motherhood ; her love for him was the result of the thirty years during which he had been dependent upon it. And now he had died far from her, suddenly, in the cold and filthy water like a dog. Then she began to think how warm were the blankets in which she used to wrap him. What attentive care, what a petted childhood, what fondling and what tender affection, all to result in one day seeing him drowned miserably. At these thoughts Madame Raquin felt a choking sensation at her throat ; she hoped she was about to die, strangled by grief.

Old Michaud got away as soon as he could. He left Suzanne with the old lady, and went out with Olivier to join Laurent in order to get to Saint-Onen as soon as possible.

On the road they scarcely exchanged a word. Each of them had got into a corner of the cab which was jolting them over the pavement. They sat mute and immovable in the depths of the shadows which filled the vehicle. And, ever and anon, the swift flash of a gas-jet threw a lurid light upon their faces. The sad occurrence which had brought them together surrounded them with a sort of mournful dejection.

When they arrived at last at the water-side restaurant, they found Thérèse in bed, her head and hands on fire. The landlord told them in a whisper that the young lady was in a high fever. The truth was that Thérèse, feeling weak and cowardly, had made up her mind to feign illness lest she should be frightened into confessing the murder. She maintained an obstinate silence, kept her lips and her eyes close shut, dreading to speak, and refusing to see any one. With the sheets drawn up to her chin, her face half buried in the pillow, she huddled herself up, anxiously

listening the while to everything that was said in the room. And all the time, in the tawny light that filtered through her closed eyelids, she could see the death-struggle between Camille and Laurent in the boat; she could see her husband's face rising wan, ghastly, and swollen, above the turbid waters. And the horrid sight aggravated the fever in her blood.

Old Michaud attempted to speak to her, to console her. She only turned her back to him with an impatient gesture and fell to sobbing afresh.

"Best leave her alone, sir," said the landlord, "the least noise makes her shudder. You see, what she wants is rest."

Downstairs, in the public room, a police-agent was drawing up an official report of the accident. Michaud and his son went down, followed by Laurent. As soon as Olivier had introduced himself as one of the chief inspectors at headquarters, the whole affair was at an end in ten minutes. The rowing party were still there, describing the disaster in its minutest details, illustrating the exact way in which the three holiday-makers fell overboard, giving themselves out as eye-witnesses. If the least suspicion as to the real state of affairs had suggested itself to Olivier and his father, such evidence as this would have put it to flight at once. But not for a moment had it occurred to them to doubt the truth of Laurent's story; on the contrary, they introduced him to the police-agent as the dead man's best friend; and they made a point of his recording the fact that the young fellow had dived into the river to save Camille Raquin. The next morning the fullest details of the accident appeared in all the newspapers; the unhappy mother, the disconsolate widow, the heroic and devoted friend, each formed the subject of a paragraph in the thrilling column which went the rounds of the Parisian press, and found its way to the front page of every provincial organ.

When the official report had been drawn up, a hot flood of relief came to warm Laurent into new life. From the moment when he felt his victim's teeth biting into his neck, he had been as it were petrified; he had been doing everything mechanically, in accordance with the plan he had elaborated long before. It was simply the instinct of self-preservation that urged him on, that inspired his speech, that suggested his gestures of despair. But now, now that he was assured of impunity, the blood began to flow in his veins as equably and as apathetically as ever. The police had been confronted with his crime, and the police had failed to recognise it; he had duped them thoroughly—nay more, he had got them to sign his acquittal. He was saved; and, at the thought, a warm thrill of delight ran through his whole body, a glow which restored all his vigour of brain and of limb. He kept up his part of the distracted friend with extraordinary skill and presence of mind. As a matter of fact, his satisfaction was wholly animal; his thoughts lay in the direction of Thérèse, who was lying asleep in the room upstairs.

“We can't leave the poor young thing here,” he said to Michaud. “A serious illness may be the result of all this, and we must positively take her back to Paris. Come, we'll manage to persuade her to return with us.”

When they got upstairs, he spoke to Thérèse himself; he entreated her to get up, to let them take her to the Passage du Pont-Neuf. When the young woman heard the sound of his voice, she started; she opened her eyes wide, and fixed them upon him. She looked at him in stupefaction, trembling all over. She raised herself with some difficulty, but in silence. The men went out, leaving her alone with the landlord's wife. When she was dressed she tottered downstairs and got into the cab, supported by Olivier.

The journey was a silent one. Laurent, with an audacity only equalled by his coolness, slipped his hand along the young woman's skirts and took her fingers in his. He was sitting opposite her, in a floating shadow; he could not see her face, which she kept bent on her bosom. When he had got hold of her hand, he squeezed it hard and kept it in his as far as the Rue Mazarine. He could feel how it trembled; but it was not withdrawn; on the contrary, it now and again returned his caresses. And, the one close held in the other, the two hands were burning; the damp palms stuck together, and the clinging fingers bruised each other at every jolt. To Laurent and Thérèse, it seemed as if their blood was pouring from the one heart into the other through the channel of their joined hands; these hands had become a fiery furnace in which their very souls were blazing. In the midst of the darkness and the heart-rending silence about them, the desperate grip they were exchanging was, as it were, a crushing weight cast upon Camille's head to keep him under water.

When the cab stopped, Michaud and his son were the first to alight. Laurent bent towards his mistress, and whispered in her ear.

"Be strong, Thérèse," he murmured. "We shall have to wait a long while. Remember!"

The young woman had not spoken yet. She opened her lips for the first time since her husband's death.

"Yes, I shall remember," she said, with a shiver and in a voice as faint as a breath.

Olivier was holding out his hand to her, inviting her to alight. This time, Laurent ventured to go as far as the shop. Madame Raquin was in bed, and raving in delirium. Thérèse dragged herself up to her room, and Suzanne had hardly time to undress her before she was between the sheets. Laurent went away, reassured and satisfied that

everything was going on as well as he could possibly desire. He strolled home slowly to his garret in the Rue Saint-Victor.

It was past midnight. A pleasant breeze was sweeping the silent and deserted streets. All that the young man could hear was the monotonous tramp of his footsteps on the flags of the pavement. The refreshing night air filled him with well-being ; the silence, the obscurity affected him with a pungent sensation of content. He was again a loungeur at large.

He had got his crime off his hands at last. He had succeeded in killing Camille. That was an accomplished fact which could arouse no further comment. He was now going to live at his ease while he awaited the most propitious opportunity of taking possession of Thérèse. The thought of this murder had sometimes almost choked him ; now that the murder had been committed, the weight was off his mind, he could breathe freely once more, he was cured of the sufferings which his vacillation and his cowardice had caused him to endure.

In point of fact, he was a trifle stupefied ; his limbs and his brain were exhausted with fatigue. He got home at last, and fell into a sound sleep. And while he slept his face kept twitching with an involuntary contraction of the muscles.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next morning Laurent woke up fresh and fit; he had slept well. The cold air which came in at the window was whipping up his sluggish blood. He had almost forgotten the events of the day before; if it were not for the hot smart that was burning at his neck, he could have almost brought himself to believe that he had gone to bed at ten o'clock, after a quiet evening. Camille's bite felt like the mark of a red-hot iron on his skin. When he began to think of the pain which this wound was causing him, it became a very torture. It seemed to him that a dozen needles were being gradually stuck into his flesh.

He turned down his shirt-collar, and inspected the scar in a wretched sixpenny looking-glass that was hanging on the wall. The wound was a red hole as big as a penny piece; the skin had been torn away, and the flesh was exposed—all pink, and spotted with dark stains; the stream of blood had trickled as far as the shoulder in scattered dribbles which were scaling off. The deep dull brown of the bite stood out distinctly on the white neck; it was on the right, just under the ear. As Laurent was looking at it, with bent back and craned neck, the greenish mirror reflected his face into a hideous grimace.

Satisfied with the result of his inspection, he had a good wash, and consoled himself with the reflection that the wound would heal up in a very few days. Then he dressed, and quietly went off to the office, the same as usual. He gave an account of the accident with unmistakable emotion.

When his colleagues had read the thrilling details which were going the round of the press, they made quite a hero of him. For a whole week the clerks of the Orleans railway could talk of nothing else ; they seemed to consider it a subject of legitimate pride that one of their comrades should have been drowned. As for Grivet, there was no stopping the torrent of his eloquence with regard to the rashness of adventuring oneself upon the open Seine, when, if you must have a look at the river, it is so easy to take it from the bridges.

Laurent had still, however, one grave source of anxiety left. It was, of course, impossible as yet to furnish any legal proof of Camille's death. Thérèse's husband was, no doubt, as dead as could be ; but his murderer would have preferred to have recovered the corpse, so that official confirmation of the decease might be registered. The day after the accident, a fruitless search had been made for the body ; the general opinion was that he must have sunk to the bottom of some deep hole, under the banks of the islands. A host of marauders were already busily dragging the Seine, in the hope of securing the reward.

Laurent made it his business to look in at the Morgue every morning, on his way to the office. He had vowed to attend to his own affairs himself. Notwithstanding the repugnance of the task, and notwithstanding the cold shudders that it sent through him at times, he went regularly for more than a week to inspect the features of all the drowned who lay stretched on the flags.

Whenever he went in, a faint odour—a smell of the washing of flesh—made him feel sick, and the cold atmosphere chilled his blood ; the dampness of the walls seemed to penetrate his clothing, and to make it hang heavier about his shoulders. He used to go straight to the glass partition which separates the spectators from the corpses ; he would

flatten his pale face against the panes, and gaze in. Before him were the rows of grey slabs in a line. Here and there, on the slabs, were arranged bodies which looked like stains of green or yellow, white or red ; some of them, though rigid in death, were not disfigured ; others might have been nothing more than bleeding and rotten heaps of carrion. At the back, against the wall, a lot of wretched rags were hung up—petticoats and trousers, looking hideous against the bare plaster. At first Laurent noticed little but the paleness of the slabs and walls, stained with red and black by the clothes and the corpses. And there was a sound of running water.

But, little by little, he observed the various bodies. Then he examined them in rotation. The only remains that interested him were those of the drowned ; when there were several bodies, swollen and blue from long immersion, he looked them over eagerly, hoping to recognize Camille. Often the flesh was falling from their features in strips ; the bones had made their way through the sodden skin ; the faces looked as if they had been first boiled and then boned. Laurent was undecided ; he inspected more closely ; he did his best to make himself recognize the attenuated proportions of his victim. But the drowned cannot help being corpulent ; he came across nothing but inflated stomachs, swollen thighs, and big bloated arms. He could not make sure ; he would stop there shuddering before those greenish rags which seemed to be jeering at him with horrible grimaces.

One morning he really was frightened out of his wits. For some minutes he had been gazing at the short and terribly disfigured body of a drowned man. This one's flesh was so battered and sodden that the water, which was flowing over, kept removing it in morsels. The jet which was directed upon the face had dug itself a hole on the left

of the nose. And, all of a sudden, the nostrils fell in, the lips gave way and showed the white row of teeth. The head of this corpse burst into a laugh.

Every time he fancied he had recognized Camille, Laurent felt a burning at the heart. He was eagerly longing to recover his victim's body; and yet he trembled in every limb when he thought he was at last in presence of it. His visits to the Morgue gave him the nightmare, shook him with shudders that made him gasp again. He tried hard to get rid of these terrors, he called himself a great baby, he did his best to pluck up his courage; but in spite of everything, from the moment he found himself in the midst of the damp air and faint smells of the place, his physical man was seized with nausea, and his whole being was filled with deep horror and disgust.

When he came to the last row of slabs without having seen any drowned people, he began to breathe again; his repugnance almost vanished. Thus, having become a mere idler, he found a strange pleasure at meeting death by violence face to face in all its phases of the extraordinary and the grotesque. The sight amused him, particularly when he beheld the bare breast of a woman. This brutal exhibition of dead fellow-creatures, wounded in places and splashed with their gore, attracted and fascinated him. Once he saw a young woman of twenty, a daughter of the people, tall and shapely, who seemed to be only asleep on the slab; her fresh plump body was whitening into an extreme delicacy of tint; she was half-smiling, with her head a little aside, and her chest protruding provokingly. One might have taken her for a reclining courtesan, had it not been for a black line, like a necklace about her throat; it was a girl who had just hung herself in despair at being crossed in love. Laurent gazed upon her a long time, his eyes lingering upon her flesh, absorbed in a kind of timorous desire.

Every morning while he was there he could hear the hum of the crowd as it swarmed in and out, to and fro.

The Morgue is an exhibition within the reach of every purse, and to which the passer-by, rich or poor, can treat himself gratuitously. The door is open, enter who will. There are even some consciences who go out of their way rather than miss one of these illustrations of death. When the slabs are empty, people go out much disappointed, and grumbling between their teeth as if they had been robbed. When the slabs are pretty numerously tenanted, when there is a fine show of human flesh, the audience throng on each other's heels, give way to a little cheap emotion, exhibit their terror or their hilarity, hiss or applaud, just as they would at a theatre. Then they retire perfectly satisfied, and vowing that the Morgue is quite a success to-day.

Laurent soon got to know the frequenters of the place, a mixed collection of incongruities who had nothing in common except their desire to give vent to their feelings of compassion or ridicule. Workmen came in on their way to work, with their tools and a long loaf under their arms; they looked upon death as something irresistibly comic. Among them was to be found an occasional workshop wit, who managed to raise a laugh by cracking a joke about the ugly faces the corpses were making. Those who had been burnt to death he would call charcoal manufacturers. For the different fate of each he would extemporise a different gibe; and, amid the shuddering silence of the hall, you could hear his husky voice quavering out the catch-words and back-slang of the day. Then came the small capitalists, thin and mummified old men; loungers who dropped in out of curiosity, and who gaped at the bodies with stupidity in their eyes and pouts of peaceful and dainty men on their lips. A large proportion of the visitors were women; there were pink-faced young work-girls, with their white linen

and clean skirts, who trotted lightly from one end of the partition to the other, opening their big attentive eyes as if they were taking stock of the show in a milliner's window ; there were, besides, women of the lower class, staring foolishly at the sights and talking about it in a dolorous whine ; and again, some well-dressed ladies, sweeping the floor apathetically with their silk trains.

One day Laurent noticed one of the latter, who was standing a yard or so from the partition, and pressing a cambric handkerchief to her nostrils. She was wearing a charming grey silk skirt, under a voluminous mantle of black lace ; a small veil concealed her features, and her gloved hands looked very tiny and very dainty. She exhaled a delicious perfume of violets. She was looking at a corpse. On a slab, a few paces off, was stretched the body of a strapping young fellow, a mason who had just fallen from a scaffold and been killed on the spot. He had a mighty chest, short and powerful muscles, a white and smooth skin ; death had turned him into marble. The lady was inspecting him, analyzing him—weighing him, as it were—with her glance, absorbing herself in the contemplation of this man. She lifted a corner of her veil, took a last look, and disappeared.

Now and then a troop of boys would arrive, children from twelve to fifteen years of age, and rush up and down the partition, only stopping before the female corpses. They rested their hands on the panes, and feasted their insolent gaze upon the bare bosoms. They kept jogging each other with their elbows and passing brutal remarks ; they learnt vice even at the school of death. It's at the Morgue that young street Arabs possess their first mistress.

At the end of a week, Laurent was thoroughly sick of it. At night he dreamed of the corpses he had seen in the morning. This torture, added to the daily disgust he was forcing himself to endure, ended by so upsetting him that he

made up his mind to release himself from his task after two visits more. The next day, as he was walking into the Morgue, he received a blow full in the face ; just opposite him, on a slab, Camille, with raised head and eyes half open, was lying on his back, and looking at him !

The murderer went up to the partition slowly, as though fascinated and without being able to take his eyes off his victim. He was not much agitated, however ; he was only feeling a strange chill in his vitals and a slight prickling of the skin. He had expected to be ever so much more frightened. For five long minutes he stood motionless, lost in an unconscious reverie, and, despite himself, engraving upon his memory every horrid line, every filthy colour of the picture before him.

Camille presented an ignoble appearance, indeed. He had been a whole fortnight in the water. His face was seemingly still firm and rigid ; the features were not much altered, the skin only had assumed a muddy yellowish hue. The thin, bony, slightly tumefied head was grotesquely grimacing ; it was a little bent forward, with the hair sticking to the temples, the eyelids raised, showing the pale ball of the eye ; the lips were distorted, drawn to one corner of the mouth, and were set in an awful grin ; a bit of blackish tongue peeped through the whiteness of the teeth. That head, looking tanned and wizened, was all the more fearful to the horror-struck observer in that it still presented some resemblance to life. The body seemed to be no more than a heap of decomposed flesh ; it had been shockingly knocked about. One could see that the arms only hung by a thread ; the collar-bones were coming through the skin of the shoulders. About the greenish breast the ribs traced their black outline. The left side had burst open, and revealed a deep gap hung about with ribbons of flesh of a dull red. The whole trunk was a mass of corruption. The legs, not

so far gone, were stretched out at full length, and discoloured with foul stains. The feet were falling to pieces.

Laurent looked at Camille. None of the drowned he had as yet seen was one-half so ghastly an object. Besides, this corpse looked so mean, so thin, and so poor a thing; it was rotting into nothingness; the heap that it made was such a little one. Any one would have guessed at once that there lay a clerk at twelve hundred francs a year, a stupid and sickly creature, brought up by its mother on diet drinks. That wretched body, which had grown up between hot blankets, was now shivering on the cold slab.

When Laurent was able at last to get the better of the poignant curiosity which had kept him there motionless and open-mouthed, he went out and fell to walking smartly along the quay. And, as he walked, he said to himself over and over again: "That is what I have done with him. He is vile." It seemed to him that an acrid smell was dogging his steps, the odour that the body must be exhaling in its putrefaction.

He went to call upon old Michaud, and to tell him that he had just recognised Camille on one of the slabs at the Morgue. Every formality was soon complied with; the drowned man was buried; his death was duly registered. Laurent, easy at last, applied himself with delight to the task of forgetting his crime and the sad and tiresome scenes which the murder had brought in its train.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE shop in the Passage du Pont-Neuf remained closed for three whole days. When it was opened again, it looked even darker and damper than before. The stock-in-trade was yellow with dust, and seemed to be sharing the mourning of the household; in the dirty windows everthing was at sixes and sevens. Behind the linen caps hung up on the rusty rods the pallor of Thérèse's face loomed more dead, more earthy than ever, and her impassibility was of an ill-omened import.

In the Passage all the gossips were lamenting aloud. The dealer in imitation jewellery pointed out to each of her customers the emaciated profile of the young widow as an interesting and a pitiful curiosity.

For three days Madame Raquin and Thérèse had stayed in bed without exchanging a word, without even seeing each other. The old lady, sitting straight up against the pillows, was staring into vacancy with the eyes of an idiot. The death of her son had struck her the same as a heavy blow on the head, and she had fallen beneath it like a log. She would remain quiet and apathetic for whole hours, absorbed in the depths of her unavailing despair; then sometimes she would have a sudden fit of weeping, of screaming, or of delirium. Thérèse, in the next room, seemed to be asleep; she had turned her face to the wall, and pulled the counterpane over her eyes; and so she remained as if laid out, rigid and silent, without moving the sheets which covered her by so much as a single sob. One would have thought she was

trying in the shadow of the alcove to hide recollections which were petrifying her. Suzanne, who was watching the two women, went feebly from the one to the other, treading as lightly as possible, craning her wax-like face over the two beds in turn, without however prevailing upon Thérèse to look round—she only got gestures of roughest impatience in reply—not being able to console Madame Raquin, whose tears began to flow directly any voice roused her from her prostration.

The third day Thérèse threw off the counterpane and sat up quickly in the bed, with a sort of feverish decision. She pushed back the hair from her forehead, and, pressing her hands to it, she remained so a moment, holding each temple tight, her eyes fixed, still deep in thought. Then she jumped on to the carpet. Her limbs were trembling, and reddened with fever; great livid patches stained her skin, which was shrivelled in places as if there were not enough flesh underneath. She looked like an old woman.

Suzanne, who was just coming in, seemed quite surprised to find her up; she advised her, in a placid drawl, to get back into bed, to rest herself a little longer. Thérèse was not listening to her; she was hunting for her clothes and putting them on in trembling haste. When she was fully dressed she went to look at herself in a glass, and passed her hand over her face as though she were wiping off something; then without saying a word, she crossed the dining-room with a quick step, and went in to Madame Raquin.

The old tradeswoman was in a quiet interval of stupefaction. When Thérèse came in she turned her head and followed the young widow with her eyes, as, in silence and dejection, the latter came to stand in front of her. The two women watched each other for some seconds, the niece with increasing apprehension, the aunt with a painful effort of memory. Remembering at last, however, and holding forth

her trembling arms, Madame Raquin threw them about Thérèse's neck and exclaimed :

“My poor boy ! my poor Camille !”

She was weeping, and her tears were evaporating upon the burning skin of the widow, who was hiding her dry eyes in the folds of the sheet. Thérèse maintained her prone position, and let the old mother cry out her fill. Ever since the murder she had dreaded this first interview ; she had kept her bed in order to put it off as long as possible, and to study at her ease the terrible part she had to play.

When she found that Madame Raquin was calming down, she began to busy herself about her ; she advised her to get up, to go down to the shop. The old woman had almost fallen into second childhood. The unexpected apparition of her niece had brought about a favourable crisis, which had just restored to her her memory and the power of recognising surrounding objects and people. She thanked Suzanne for the care she had taken of her ; she conversed, very weak, but no longer delirious, full of a grief which at times almost choked her. She kept watching Thérèse moving about, with sudden tears ; and then she would call her to her, kiss her with more sobbing, and tell her in a choking voice that now she had nothing left in the world but her.

That evening she consented to get up, to try to eat. It was then that Thérèse was able to gauge the full force of the blow which her aunt had received. The poor old woman's legs had become dead weights. She could not get into the dining-room without the help of a stick, and even then the walls seemed to be turning round her.

But, from the morrow, she insisted on the shop being opened. She was afraid of going mad if she remained alone in her room. She came heavily down the wooden stairs,

resting both feet on each step, and took her usual place behind the counter. From that day forward she was a fixture there in her placid grief.

At her side Thérèse was thinking and waiting. The shop resumed its sombre appearance of tranquillity.

CHAPTER XV.

LAURENT came to see them sometimes in the evening, once in two or three days. He would stay in the shop and talk to Madame Raquin for half an hour. Then he would take his departure, without ever having looked Thérèse straight in the face. The old tradeswoman looked upon him as her niece's saviour, as a noble character who had done all in his power to give her back her son. She always received him with a tearful kindness.

One Thursday evening, when Laurent was there, old Michaud and Grivet came in. It was just eight o'clock. The clerk and the ex-commissary had each, on his side, judged the occasion propitious for the resumption of their beloved habits, without seeming too importunate; and so they both arrived at the same moment, as though impelled by the same machinery. Behind them, Olivier and Suzanne made their appearance.

They were invited up to the dining-room. Madame Raquin, who was not expecting anybody, made haste to light the lamp and to make tea. When everybody was seated round the table, each before his cup, and when the domino-box had been emptied, the poor mother, suddenly reminded of the past, looked at her guests, and burst into tears. There was one empty place—her son's.

Such despair was chilling and tiresome to the company. All their faces had put on an air of selfish beatitude. These people found themselves ill at ease, they who had not the least present memory of Camille in their hearts.

“Come, dear lady,” cried old Michaud, rather impatiently,

“you must really not give way like that. You will make yourself ill.”

“We are all mortal,” asserted Grivet.

“Your weeping can’t possibly give you back your son,” said Olivier, sententiously.

“Ah, madame,” murmured Suzanne, “pray don’t make us all wretched !”

And as Madame Raquin, who could not check her tears, was sobbing all the faster :

“Come, come,” resumed Michaud, “a little courage, now ! Don’t you understand that we have come here on purpose to change the current of your thoughts ? Hang it all ! don’t let us make ourselves miserable ; we must try to forget ! Let’s see, we’ll play for two sous the game. What do you say to that ?”

With a supreme effort, the old lady stifled her tears. Perhaps she noticed her guests’ happy selfishness. She wiped her eyes, though still quite upset. In her poor old hands the dominoes were rattling, and the tears about her eyelashes darkened her sight.

They began to play.

Laurent and Thérèse had been observing this short scene with a grave and impassive air. The young man was delighted that the Thursday evenings had been resumed. He had been eagerly longing for them, knowing that these gatherings would be necessary for the attainment of his object. Then, without asking himself why, he felt more at his ease in the midst of these few people whom he knew, he dared look Thérèse in the face.

The young woman, dressed in black, pale and thoughtful, seemed that night to possess a beauty he had not before observed. He was glad to be able to meet her eyes, and to feel them fixed upon his with such courageous self-possession. Thérèse still belonged to him—body and soul !

CHAPTER XVI.

FIFTEEN months passed by. The first bitterness of death was softened ; every day brought with it more peace of mind, a deeper apathy ; the dull routine was resumed again with weary langour, with the stupefied monotony that a great crisis leaves in its train. And, at first, Laurent and Thérèse let themselves drift with the current of the new life which was effecting a transformation in them ; a latent force was at work in them, all the various phases of which it would require the most delicate analysis to trace.

Laurent soon began to appear at the shop every evening, as of old. But he no longer dined there ; he never spent whole evenings there now. He would arrive at half-past nine, and go away after having shut up the shop. He almost seemed to be fulfilling a duty in placing himself at the service of the two women. If one day he happened to neglect his task, he would apologize on the morrow for his defection with the most abject humility. On Thursdays he helped Madame Raquin to light the fire ; to do the honours of the house. The old lady was charmed with his unobtrusive attentions.

Thérèse looked on with equanimity as he hovered about her. Her extreme pallor had disappeared ; she seemed better in health, more inclined to smile, more gentle. Very rarely did her lips contract with a nervous twitch and reveal the two deep lines of care that imparted such a strange expression of anguish and affright to her face.

The two lovers no longer sought opportunities to meet in

private. They never made an appointment with each other ; they never so much as exchanged a furtive kiss. The murder had, as it were, allayed their voluptuous fever of the senses ; in killing Camille, they had succeeded in satisfying the fiery and unbridled passions which they had been unable to satiate in each other's arms. The crime seemed to them a pungent luxury which had spoiled their taste for the cloying sweetness of their former caresses.

It would, however, have been perfectly easy for them to lead the life of free love for which they had craved so ferociously as to commit a murder to attain it. Madame Raquin, in her impotent and benumbed condition, was no obstacle. The house belonged to them ; they could go out, wander as far as they liked. But love was no longer a temptation to them ; they had lost all appetite for it. They stopped where they were, in calm conversation, looking at each other without a blush and without a thrill ; and they seemed to have forgotten the mad embraces which had bruised their flesh and caused their bones to creak. They even went so far as to avoid being alone together ; they could find nothing to say to each other in private, and they were both afraid of treating the other too coldly. When they had to shake hands, the contact of their skin made them uncomfortable.

Besides, they each thought they had found an explanation for their indifference and nervousness in each other's presence. They put down their cold demeanour to the score of prudential motives. According to them, their calmness, their abstinence, were proofs of the highest wisdom. They persuaded themselves that this lull of the passion, this slumber of the heart, were in obedience to an effort of their will. Again, they considered that the repugnance and uneasiness which they were experiencing could be nothing more than the consequence of the shock and a latent fear of retribution. Some-

times, they would force themselves into hope ; they would woo once again the burning dreams of the past ; and when they found that their imagination was a void, they were struck with astonishment. Then they would buoy themselves up with the thought of their approaching marriage. Surely, when they had attained their object, when all their terrors had vanished, when they legally belonged to each other, their passion would return in full force, they would enjoy the delights of which they had so often dreamt. This hope calmed them down, and saved them from sinking to the bottom of the chaos which was forming within them. They persuaded themselves that their love was as ardent as of old ; they were awaiting the hour which, in uniting them for ever, was to give them a happiness without alloy.

Thérèse had never been so calm in mind. She was certainly becoming a better woman. All the sternness of her volition seemed to be relaxing.

Alone in her bed at night, she felt happy. She had to endure no longer at her side Camille's thin face and puny body that used to so exasperate her flesh and fill her with unsatisfied desires. She fancied she was a little girl again, a maiden between the white curtains, at peace in the dark silence. Her room, which was spacious and rather cold, was to her taste, with its lofty ceilings, its gloomy corners, and its monastic odour. She even came to take a fancy to the high black wall which rose over against the window. Every evening during a whole summer she passed long hours, looking at the grey stones of that wall, and the narrow patches of starry sky between the chimney-pots and the roofs. She never gave a thought to Laurent, except when some nightmare woke her up with a start ; and then, sitting up in the bed, trembling, her eyes dilated, huddling herself up in her chemise, she would tell herself that she would not be exposed to these sudden alarms if she had a

man beside her. She thought of her lover then, as she would of a dog who could protect and watch over her. There was not a single thrill of desire in her cool and equable temperament.

In the day-time when she was in the shop, she would take an interest in the outer world. She would wake up now that she was no longer living in a state of secret rebellion and feeding upon thoughts of hatred and revenge. It bored her now to sit musing; she felt a longing for occupation and movement. From morning to night she watched the people who walked through the Passage. The noise, the hurry to and fro, amused her. She was becoming curious, and a chatterbox—in a word, a woman—for until then she had acted and thought as would a man.

She espied one day from her post of observation a young man, a student, who lived in furnished apartments close by, and who passed the shop several times a day. This personage was pale and handsome, with the long hair of a poet and the moustaches of an officer. Thérèse decided that he was very distinguished-looking. Like any school-girl, she fell in love with him—for a week. She took to reading novels; she compared the young man to Laurent; and very ponderous, very thick-set did Laurent appear to her. Her course of reading opened out horizons of romance of which as yet she had not even heard. She had only loved with her flesh and her nerves, now she began to love with her brain. And then one day the student disappeared; no doubt he had moved to another neighbourhood. In a few hours Thérèse had forgotten him.

She took out a subscription to a circulating library, and proceeded to fall in love with the heroes of all the novels she devoured. This new-born passion for reading produced a great effect upon her temperament. She became so nervously sensitive that she would laugh or cry without the

slightest reason. The even balance into which her mind had seemed to be settling was roughly shaken. She fell into a sort of vague reverie. Now and then a recollection of Camille gave her a shock, and her thoughts would turn to Laurent with a fresh longing, full of alarm and mistrust. She was thus delivered into the hands of her old tortures once again. Now she would seek for the means of marrying her lover without delay; now she would contrive a plan for escaping from him never to see him more. The high-flown language of the novels about honour and chastity interposed a sort of obstacle between her volition and her instincts. She remained the same indomitable animal that had conceived a struggle with the Seine, and had thrown itself headlong into adultery; but she began to understand the existence of goodness and gentleness, to account for the sad face and despairing mien of Olivier's wife, and to know that a woman need not murder her husband and yet be happy. Then she almost became doubtful of her own identity, and lived in a state of the most wretched uncertainty.

On his side Laurent passed through several different phases of alternate fever and tranquillity. At first he remained in the enjoyment of the most absolute peace of mind; he felt as it were relieved of an enormous burden. Sometimes it would all seem to him nothing more than a nightmare; he would question himself in his astonishment; he would ask himself if it were really true that he had thrown Camille into the water, and had really seen his corpse on the slabs of the Morgue. The recollection of his crime surprised him strangely; never would he have deemed himself capable of committing murder; all that was prudent, all that was cowardly in his composition shuddered, and cold sweats rose on his brow when he thought that his crime might have been discovered—might have brought

him to the guillotine. At such moments he could feel the sharp chill of the knife at his neck. As long as there was need for action he had gone straight ahead with an obstinacy and a blindness that was purely animal. Now that he was looking back and could see the abyss which he had just crossed, he was seized with a vertigo of terror.

“Certainly I must have been drunk,” he thought; “that woman had intoxicated me with her caresses. Good Lord! what a fool and ass I was! I was risking the guillotine on a job like that. Well, all’s well that ends well. But if it had to be done over again, I wouldn’t touch it!”

Laurent collapsed, ran to seed, became more prudent and more cowardly than ever. He grew fat and flabby. No one who made a study of this unwieldy, piled-up carcass, that seemed to contain neither bones nor nerves, would ever have dreamt of suspecting it of any inclination either to cruelty or to violence.

He resumed his old habits. For several months he was a model clerk, performing his duties with the most exemplary callousness. In the evening he dined at a cheap eating-house in the Rue Saint-Victor, cutting up his bread into thin slices, masticating slowly, dragging out his meal as long as possible; then he stretched himself out, leant against the wall, and smoked his pipe. You would have taken him for some fat old family-man. During the day he thought simply about nothing at all; at night his sleep was heavy and dreamless. With his fat, rosy face, his well-lined stomach, and his empty brain, he was happy.

His passions seemed to be dead; the memory of Thérèse was growing dim. He sometimes thought about her as one does of the woman one is to marry some day in the indefinite future. He was patiently awaiting the nuptial hour, forgetful of the woman, dreaming only of the altered position it would give him. He would give up the office;

he would do some painting for amusement ; he would lounge away the time. Such hopes as these induced him to return every evening to the shop in the Passage, notwithstanding the vague uneasiness which he felt whenever he went in.

One Sunday he felt bored, and did not know what to do with himself, so he went to see his old school friend, the young painter, with whom he had shared lodgings so long. The artist was working at a picture which he intended to send to the Salon, and of which the subject was a nude Bacchante lying full length on a strip of drapery. At the end of the studio a model, a woman, was lying down, her head leant back, her body twisted, her hip raised. Every now and then this woman broke into merry laughter, expanding her chest, thrusting out her arms, and stretching herself, as her position was somewhat cramped. Laurent, who was sitting opposite her, kept his eyes fixed on her as he smoked and talked to his friend. His blood throbbed in his veins, his nerves were irritated by this contemplation. He remained until nightfall, and then took the woman home with him. He kept her as his mistress for nearly a year. He seemed a handsome fellow enough to the poor girl, and she fell in love with him. In the morning she used to go out and pose to artists all day, and every evening she came back to Laurent regularly at the same time. She fed, dressed, and kept herself with the money that she earned, thus not costing a sou to Laurent, who indeed cared nothing as to whence she came or what she had been doing. This woman became a sort of additional ballast to his existence ; he accepted her as a necessary and useful adjunct, which maintained his body in peace and health. He never knew whether he loved her or not, and it never came into his head that he was unfaithful to Thérèse. He was getting fatter and jollier than ever—that was all.

Meanwhile, Thérèse's mourning had come to an end. The young woman now wore coloured dresses, and it came to pass that one evening she seemed to Laurent decidedly younger and better looking than of old. But he still experienced a certain uneasiness in her presence. For some time past she seemed to him to be feverish, full of strange caprices, ready to laugh or to cry without reason. The indecision which he noticed in her frightened him, for he could partly guess at her struggles and her troubles. He began to hesitate, as he was dreadfully afraid of risking his peace of mind. For his part, he was living a quiet life which amply satisfied his every appetite, and he was afraid to imperil the equable tenor of his existence in binding himself to a nervous creature who had already maddened him with her passions. Besides, there was no need to analyse matters. He felt instinctively that possession of Thérèse would carry with it a world of trouble for him.

The first shock which came to shake him out of his apathy was the thought that the time had now arrived to commence preparations for marriage. Fifteen months had now elapsed since Camille's death. For a moment it occurred to Laurent that he need not marry at all, that he could leave Thérèse in the lurch, and keep on the model, whose compliant and inexpensive affection was all-sufficient for him. Then he reminded himself that he could not have killed a man for nothing. When he recalled to mind the crime, and the terrible ordeal he had gone through for the sole possession of the woman who was now disquieting him, he felt that the murder would become a thing useless and atrocious if he did not marry her. To throw a man into the river, to rob him of his widow, to wait fifteen months, and then to make up his mind to be content with a girl who exhibited herself in every studio, seemed to him a very ridiculous idea, and made him laugh. Besides, was he not

bound to Thérèse by a bond of blood and of horror? He could almost feel her clamouring and writhing within him; he belonged to her. He was afraid of his accomplice. Perhaps, if he did not marry her, she would go and confess everything to the police out of revenge and jealousy. These thoughts chased each other through his brain. The fever was consuming him again.

About this time, the model left him abruptly. One Sunday, the girl did not come home; no doubt she had found a warmer and a more comfortable lodging. Laurent was but moderately put out; the only thing was, he had got accustomed to having a woman beside him at night, and her absence produced a sort of sudden void in his existence. After about a week he felt he could not stand it any longer. He began once more to pass whole evenings at the shop in the Passage; and he was soon looking at Thérèse as of old, with eyes that flashed an intermittent fire. The young woman, who generally had come to the end of a long spell of reading in a thrill of excitement, would sigh as she yielded herself to the fascination of his gaze.

They had thus both fallen back into a distracted and voluptuous frame of mind, after a long year of apathetic and dispirited patience. One evening Laurent, who was shutting up the shop, detained Thérèse in the Passage for a moment.

“Shall I come up to your room to-night?” he asked, in an ardent tone of voice.

The young woman made a terrified gesture.

“No, no, let us wait,” said she, “let us be prudent.”

“I’ve waited long enough, I think,” returned Laurent; “I’m sick of it. I want you!”

Thérèse looked at him in great agitation, her face and her hands were burning hot. She seemed to hesitate; then she said abruptly:

“Let us get married! I shall be all yours then.”

CHAPTER XVII.

LAURENT left the Passage in a highly-strung state of nervous commotion. Thérèse's agitation and abrupt consent had again roused all his former longings. He decided to go home by the quays, and walked along with his hat in his hand in order to cool his face with all the breeze that was stirring.

When he reached the Rue Saint-Victor, and the door of the house where he lived, he was afraid to go in, to find himself alone. Some childish apprehension, as inexplicable as it was unexpected, made him tremble lest he should discover a man hidden in his garret. Never before had he given way to such fits of cowardice. He did not even try to explain to himself the strange shudder which had come upon him; he hurried into a wine-shop and stopped there an hour, until midnight, sitting speechless and motionless at a table, and mechanically draining bumper after bumper of wine. He was thinking about Thérèse; he was angry with the young woman for not having chosen to admit him to her room at once, for he felt sure that he would not have had this fright if he had been in her company.

Closing-time came, and he was put out with the rest of the customers. He went in again, however, to ask for some matches; the porter's lodge at his place was on the first floor, and before being able to get his candle, there was a long alley to traverse and several steps to climb. The thought of this alley and this bit of staircase, both terribly dark, frightened him out of his wits. Generally, he could tread

that darkness boldly enough. But that evening he did not dare to ring the bell; he fancied that, in a certain recess by the cellar entrance, there might be some ruffians lying in wait to spring at his throat suddenly as he passed. At last, he rang, lighted a match, and made a determined plunge into the alley. The match went out. He stood there quite still, panting, without even the pluck to run away, rubbing matches against the damp wall with a hand trembling with anxiety. He conjured up the sound of voices and footsteps ahead of him. The matches kept breaking in his fingers. At last he succeeded in getting one alight. The sulphur began to bubble, to fire the wood so slowly that it redoubled Laurent's terrors; the pale and bluish glare of the sulphur, with its wavering gleam, revealed to his imagination all sorts of monstrosities. Then the wood crackled, the light became white and clear. Laurent, somewhat comforted, stepped on with precaution, taking care not to let out his light. When he had to pass the cellar, he hugged the opposite wall; there was a deep shadow there that frightened him. He then rushed up the few steps that led to the porter's lodge, and only thought himself safe when he had got hold of his candle. He went up the other flights more quietly, with his candle at arm's length, and exploring all the corners he had to pass. The great fantastic shadows that come and go when one is lighting oneself up a staircase, filled him with a vague disquiet as they rose abruptly before him and then disappeared.

When he had reached his landing, he opened his door and hurriedly shut himself in. His first care was to look under his bed, and subject his room to a minute inspection, to ascertain if anybody were hiding there. He closed the skylight, thinking that it might give admittance to some enemy. When he had taken these precautions, he felt much calmer; he undressed himself, astonished at his own,

pusillanimity. He ended by laughing at himself and calling himself a great baby. He had never been timid, and he was unable to account for this sudden attack of nervousness.

He went to bed. When he had got between the warm sheets, the thought of Thérèse, whom he had forgotten in his alarm, occurred to him again. Although he closed his eyes obstinately, and was trying to fall asleep, he felt that, despite him, his brain was at work, imposing its will upon him, and suggesting to him in orderly sequence the various advantages that he would gain by getting married as soon as possible. Every now and then he would turn over and say to himself: "I won't think about it. I must get to sleep. I have to be up at eight o'clock to-morrow morning to go to the office." And he tried his best to doze off. But his conjectures were forming again one by one; his reasoning was resuming its dull work; very soon he found himself plunged into a sort of sharp-set reverie, which was displaying in the depths of his brain the necessity for his marriage, and the arguments which in turn his desire and his prudence had advanced for and against his possessing Thérèse.

Then, finding it impossible to sleep, and that this wakefulness was irritating his nervous system, he turned on his back, opened his eyes wide, and permitted the memory of the young woman to invade his brain. He had lost all control over his evenly balanced disposition; the burning fever of old held him once more in its grasp. It occurred to him to get up and go back to the Passage du Pont-Neuf. He would have the gate opened; he would go and knock at the little staircase-door, and Thérèse would admit him. The blood rushed up to his neck at the idea.

There was a remarkable lucidity in this reverie of his. He could see himself in the streets, walking fast along the

houses, and he kept saying to himself: "I must go down this Boulevard, I must cross at this turning, to get there the sooner." Then he could hear the gate of the Passage creak; he went down the narrow arcade, all dark and deserted, congratulating himself on being able to go up to Thérèse without being observed by the dealer in imitation jewellery; then he imagined himself in the alley, on the little staircase he had so often ascended. There, he experienced the pungent raptures of the past; he remembered the charming dangers, the poignant delights of adultery. His recollections were becoming realities, which affected all his senses; he could smell the faint odour of the corridor, he could feel the slimy walls, he could see the dirty shadows that hung about. And he went up each step, panting, listening, and satisfying his passion by anticipation in that timid approach of the woman he longed for. And at last he was tapping at the door, the door opened, and Thérèse was there awaiting him, all white in her *deshabille*.

These fancies succeeded each other in his mind like a sequence of real events. With his eyes fixed on darkness, he could see. When at the end of his tramp through the streets, after going down the Passage and ascending the little staircase, he fancied he saw Thérèse, pale and ardent, before him, he leapt out of bed at a bound, muttering: "I must go to her, she is waiting for me." The sudden change of position dispelled the hallucination; the cold floor chilled him; he was frightened. For a moment he stood there, bare-footed, motionless, listening. He fancied he could hear a noise on the landing. If he went to Thérèse, he would have to pass once more before the cellar-door downstairs; a violent cold shudder ran down his back even to think of it. He was seized again with fright, a stupid but crushing fright. He looked suspiciously round the room, and saw whitish strips of light about it; then, quietly, and with

every precaution that his anxious haste would permit, he crept back to his bed, and, once there, huddled himself up, hid himself as though to avoid some weapon, some knife which menaced him.

The blood gushed up into his neck, and his neck was on fire. He put his hand to it; he felt the scar of Camille's bite beneath his fingers. He had almost forgotten that bite. He was horrified to find it still there on his skin; it seemed to be eating away his flesh. In order to feel it no longer he had sharply withdrawn his hand; but he could still feel it corroding, drilling his neck. Then he thought he would scratch it gently, just with the tip of his nail; it only burnt twice as fiercely as before. In order not to lacerate his skin, he clinched his two hands between his bent knees; and thus he remained, stiff and exasperated, with a gnawing at his neck, and his teeth chattering with fright.

Now his ideas kept clinging to Camille with ghastly persistence. Never until then had the drowned man disturbed Laurent's slumbers. And lo! the first dream about Thérèse raised her husband's ghost. The murderer did not dare, now, to open his eyes; he was afraid of espying his victim in some corner of the room. Once he fancied that his bed was being shaken in a queer way; he imagined that Camille must be lying hid beneath, and that it was he who was shaking it so, to tumble him out of it and then bite him. With a haggard face and every hair standing on end, he gripped hold of the mattress, fully persuaded that the shocks were increasing in violence.

Then he perceived that the bed was not moving. That brought about a reaction. He sat up, lighted his candle, and cursed himself for a fool. To allay his fever, he gulped down a large glass of water.

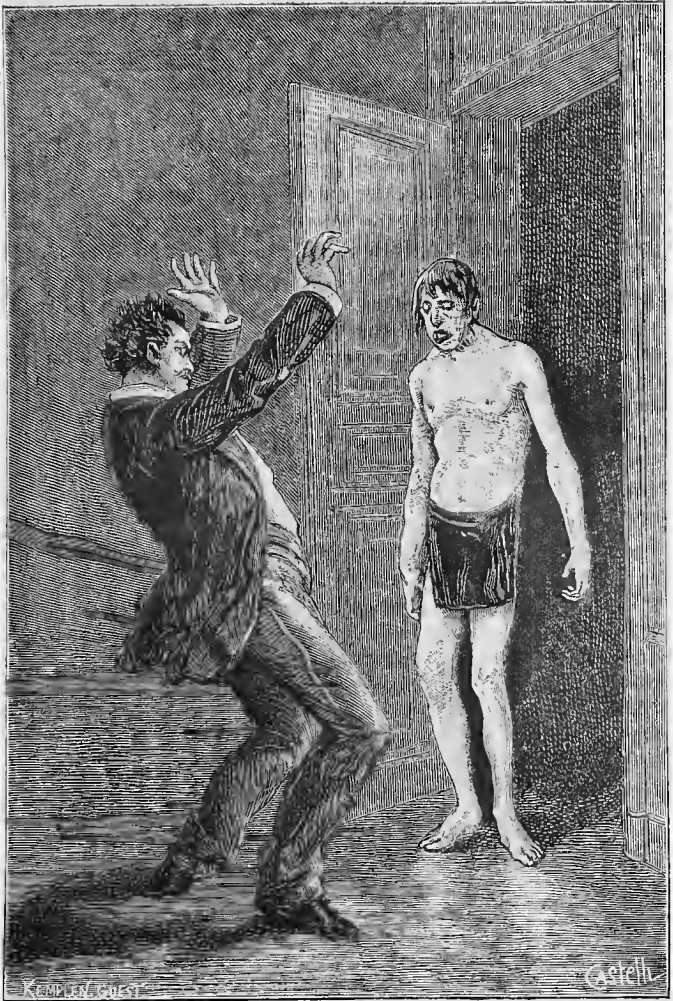
"I oughtn't to have got drinking at that dram-shop," he thought. "I don't know what's the matter with me to-

night. It's absurd. I shall feel awfully seedy at the office all day. I ought to have gone to sleep directly I went to bed, and not bothered my head with a lot of rubbish; that's what has kept me awake. Let's go to sleep."

He blew out the light once more. Somewhat refreshed, he buried his head in the pillow, fully determined not to think, not to be frightened again. His nerves were becoming relaxed with fatigue.

He did not fall into his accustomed profound and heavy sleep; he glided gradually into a sort of vague somnolence. He was, as it were, merely benumbed—steeped in a kind of mild and voluptuous torpor. His body was awake as he slept; his understanding was alive in his inanimate form. He had put to flight the thoughts that thronged upon him; he had evaded his vigil. But when he dozed off, when he lost the control of his muscles and the mastery of his will, his thoughts came back quietly, one after another, and resumed possession of his faltering being. His reverie returned to him. Once again he travelled the distance that separated him from Thérèse; he went downstairs, he ran full speed past the cellar, and found himself outside the house; he hurried along all the streets through which he had passed before, when he was dreaming with his eyes open; he went into the Passage du Pont-Neuf, ascended the little staircase, and tapped at the door. But instead of Thérèse, instead of the young woman in deshabille, displaying her bare bosom, it was Camille who opened to his summons—Camille as he had seen him at the Morgue, turning green, and unspeakably disfigured. And the corpse held out its arms to him with a ghoulish laugh, showing a bit of blackened tongue between the whiteness of its teeth.

Laurent uttered a yell of horror and woke up with a start. He was bathed in icy perspiration. He dragged up the counterpane over his eyes, cursing himself, and



LAURENT'S NIGHTMARE.

getting into a rage with himself. He tried to fall asleep again.

He did fall asleep again, as before, gradually. The same lassitude came upon him; and as soon as his volition had escaped him in the languor of semi-somnolence, he started on his errand again: he returned to where his master-passion was leading him, he hurried along to see Thérèse, and it was again the drowned man that opened the door to him.

Terrified, the villain sat up in his bed. He would have given the world to drive away this implacable dream. He longed for a slumber of lead wherein he might be free from his thoughts. So long as he kept awake, he had enough strength left to put his victim's ghost to flight; but as soon as he lost the mastery of his brain, his brain led him to fright, on the way to voluptuousness.

He gave sleep another trial. Then came a succession of voluptuous lethargies, and abrupt and heart-rending awakenings. In his mad obstinacy, he was for ever seeking out Thérèse, and for ever coming into contact with Camille's corpse. More than a dozen times running he retraced his road; he started boiling with ardour, went the same way, felt the same sensations, did the same things, with minute exactness, and, more than a dozen times he beheld the drowned man offer himself to his embrace, when he stretched forth his arms to clasp his mistress to his heart. This same ominous result, which woke him up every time in gasping distraction, did not dishearten his passion; a few minutes after, as soon as he fell asleep again, his desire would forget the ghastly corpse which awaited it, and hurry off anew to seek the warm supple body of a woman. During a whole hour, Laurent lived through this succession of nightmares, this awful dream that was always repeating itself and yet always came to such an unexpected conclusion, that shattered him, at every start, with a keener terror.

One of these shocks, the last, was so violent and so painful, that he determined to give up the struggle and get up. Day was breaking ; a grey and sullen dawn was appearing through the skylight, which was now a square of cindery white.

Laurent dressed himself slowly, in a state of latent irritation. He was furious at having been unable to sleep, at having allowed himself to give way to a fright which he now looked upon as a silly scare. While he put on his trousers, he stretched himself, he rubbed his limbs, he smoothed down his face, which was wasted and drawn by his feverish night.

“I oughtn’t to have thought about all that,” he kept repeating to himself. “I ought to have had a good sleep ; I should be fresh as paint at the present moment if I had. Ah ! if Thérèse had only chosen last night ; if Thérèse had been with me— !”

The idea that Thérèse would have prevented him feeling frightened calmed him down a little. For indeed he already dreaded the prospect of passing other nights like the one he had just endured.

He dashed some water in his face, and then touched up his hair with a comb. This apology for a toilette cooled his head, and dissipated his last remnants of fear. He could think sensibly now ; the only disagreeable sensation he experienced was a violent aching in every limb.

“And yet I am no coward,” he said to himself as he finished dressing ; “I don’t care a snap of the fingers for Camille ! It was ridiculous to fancy the poor devil could be under my bed. And now, perhaps, I shall come to fancy so every night. Decidedly I must get married as soon as possible. When I am safe in Thérèse’s arms, I sha’n’t bother much about Camille. She will kiss me on the neck, and I shall never feel that horrid burning sensation again. Let’s have a look at the bite.”

He went up to his looking-glass, stretched his neck, and looked. The scar was of a pale rose colour. Laurent experienced a certain emotion when he made out the mark of his victim's teeth; the blood rushed to his head, and then he observed a strange phenomenon. The scar was em-purpled by the rising flood; it became bright and bloody; it stood out, all red, on the fat white neck. At the same time Laurent felt sharp pricklings, as if needles had been forced into the wound. He hastened to raise his shirt collar.

“Bah!” he muttered, “Thérèse will heal that. A few of her kisses will be enough. What a fool I am to think about such things!”

He put on his hat and went down. He was longing for the open air, longing to be walking about. As he passed before the cellar-door he smiled; but he took the precaution, nevertheless, of testing the solidity of the padlock which fastened that door. When he got outside he fell to walking slowly, in the fresh morning air, along the deserted pavement. It was about five o'clock.

Laurent had a dreadful day of it. He had to fight with the overwhelming somnolence that assailed him at the office in the afternoon. His heavy and benumbed head nodded in spite of him, and he had to raise it abruptly every time he heard the step of one of his superiors. This struggle, these shocks, completed the general break-up of his system, and put him into a state of intolerable anxiety.

In the evening, notwithstanding his lassitude, he went to see Thérèse. He found her as feverish, as dejected, as tired out as himself.

“Our poor Thérèse has had a bad night,” said Madame Raquin, when he had sat down. “It seems she had the nightmare—couldn't sleep at all. Several times I heard her scream out. She was quite ill with it this morning.”

While her aunt was speaking, Thérèse was fixing her eyes

upon Laurent. No doubt they guessed at their common fears, for a nervous shudder passed over both their faces. They remained opposite to each other till ten o'clock, conversing upon different subjects, but understanding each other, and conjuring each other with a look to hasten the moment when they could combine against the drowned man.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THÉRÈSE too had been visited by Camille's ghost during that fevered night.

Laurent's burning proposal asking her to receive him, after a year or more of indifference, had produced in her an abrupt commotion. Her flesh began to tingle when, alone and in bed, she thought of her approaching marriage. And then, in the midst of her racking wakefulness, the drowned man had appeared to her; like Laurent, she had tossed about in fits of alternate desire and affright, and, like Laurent, she had persuaded herself that she would tremble no longer—she would no longer be exposed to such tortures when she held her lover in her arms.

At the same moment a sort of nervous derangement had taken place in this woman and this man, which yielded them up, palpitating and terror-stricken prisoners, to their horrible amours. A relationship of blood and passion had arisen between them. They shuddered with the same shudders; the same throes set their hearts throbbing in a kind of fraternity of pain. From that time forth they possessed between them but one body, one soul, to enjoy or to suffer. This incorporation, this reciprocal grafting, is a psychological and physiological fact which has been often observed in the case of persons whom some great nervous shock has hurled into violent contact with each other.

For more than a year Thérèse and Laurent had, with a light heart, worn the chain which was riveted to them and which united them. In the depression which succeeded to

the acute crisis of the murder, in the repulsion and the craving for peace and oblivion which followed, these two galley-slaves came to fancy themselves free, to believe themselves no longer connected by a link of iron. Their slackened chain was dragging the ground; for their part, they were taking their ease, they were wrapped in a sort of pleasant torpor; they tried to win themselves other loves to regulate their lives philosophically. But the very day when, driven by events, they had again come to speak in the language of passion, the sudden strain upon their chain gave them such a shock that they felt it must bind them for ever to each other.

From the morrow, Thérèse set to work quietly, and brought all her cunning to bear upon the compassing of her marriage with Laurent. Her task was a difficult one, and replete with peril. The chief danger that the lovers had to dread was that of acting imprudently, awakening suspicion, revealing too abruptly the interest they had had in Camille's death. Aware that it was not from them that the suggestion of a marriage should come, they decided upon a most astute course—that of getting Madame Raquin herself, and the Thursday visitors, to offer them the boon they had not the courage to crave. All they had to do was to put the idea of re-marrying Thérèse into these worthy people's heads, and, above all, to persuade them that the idea originated with them, and was therefore wholly theirs.

The comedy was long, and required clever acting. Thérèse and Laurent had each taken the part that suited them. They proceeded with the utmost prudence, calculating the effect of their least gesture, their least word. Truth to tell, they were consumed by an impatience that was straining their nerves to the utmost. They were living in the midst of a restless swarm of irritants, and they

needed all their craven dread of betraying themselves to force a smile, or assume an indifferent demeanour.

If they were eager for the fall of the curtain, it was because they could no longer bear to live separate and alone. Every night the drowned man visited them; and a demon of wakefulness kept them stretched on a bed of fiery coals, and turned them over with red-hot tongs. The enervated state in which they were living exacerbated the fever of their blood, every evening, with the awful hallucinations which it conjured up. Thérèse dared no longer go up to her room in the twilight; she suffered actual pain when at last she had to shut herself up in the big room, which became weirdly luminous, and harboured apparitions as soon as she put out the light. She ended by keeping her candle alight, by resolving not to sleep, in order to keep her eyes wide open. And when her eyelids closed with fatigue, she saw Camille in the darkness, and she opened her eyes again with a start. The next morning she would drag herself about, worn out through want of sleep, having indeed only slept a few hours at daylight.

As for Laurent, he had become quite a coward since the night he was so frightened at the cellar-door. Before that he had lived on in animal security; now, the slightest noise made him tremble and turn pale, like a little boy. One shudder of terror had abruptly shaken his limbs, and had not again relaxed its grip. At night he suffered even more than Thérèse. Terrible were the convulsions that fear produced on that flabby, cowardly carcase. It was with the most agonized apprehension that he noted the decline of day. Several times it occurred to him to prefer not to go home at all, and pass whole nights in tramping the deserted streets. Once, when it was raining in torrents, he stayed under a bridge till morning. There, huddled together, cold as ice, without

the courage to rise and go up to the quay, he watched the dirty water flowing in the whitish gloom for nearly six hours. Now and then he fell flat upon the muddy shore in a spasm of horror ; for under the bridge he seemed to see an endless procession of drowned persons swooping past with the current. When utter weariness drove him home, he double-locked the door, and went to bed to toss about till dawn in frightful paroxysms of fever. The same nightmare persecuted him persistently. He seemed ever to be falling from Thérèse's ardent and passionate embrace into Camille's freezing and viscous arms. He began by dreaming that his mistress was suffocating him with caresses, and then that the drowned man was hugging him to his putrid breast with an icy clasp. And these abrupt and alternate sensations of delight and disgust—this contact, now with a warm heart, beating with love, now with a cold corpse, sodden with slime—set him panting and shuddering and howling in agony.

And every day intensified the terror of the lovers ; every day the nightmare assailed them with more crushing, more maddening effect. Their only hope now was that they would be able to cure their wakefulness with their kisses. From prudential motives, they did not venture to renew their stolen interviews ; they were awaiting the wedding-day as a day of salvation, which would be followed by a happy night.

Thus it came to pass that they longed to be united with all the craving they had for a night of placid rest. During the period of their indifference, they had hesitated, having both forgotten the selfish and wicked object which had tempted them to commit murder, and had then, as it were, evaporated. When they found the fever upon them again, the original object which had induced them to kill Camille, the prospect of bliss which they thought lawful wedlock would ensure, revived again in the depths of their selfishness

and their passion. Besides, it was with a vague feeling of despair that they had come to the final determination of publicly uniting their destinies. In the bottom of their hearts they were afraid. Their desire was thrilling them. They were bent, in a manner, over each other, as over an abyss which had fascinated them with its horrors ; they were gazing down, reciprocally, into their entity, mute, clinging, while a giddiness, exquisitely voluptuous, enervated their limbs, and lured them over the brink. But, face to face with the present, with their anxious expectation and their timid desires, they felt the imperious necessity for shutting their eyes to possibilities, for picturing to themselves a future of happy love and peaceful enjoyment. The more they trembled in each other's presence, the better they could imagine the horrors of the chasm into which they were about to hurl themselves, and the oftener they attempted to deceive themselves with promises of happiness, to remind themselves of the irrevocable events which were relentlessly driving them to marriage.

Thérèse wanted to get married solely because she was afraid, and felt the need of her Laurent's violent caresses. She was passing through a nervous crisis that almost drove her mad. Truth to tell, she reasoned with herself very little ; she abandoned herself to her passion, with her mind unhinged by the novels she had last read, and her whole system irritated by the cruel visions which had kept her awake for so many weeks.

Laurent, who was not nearly so thin-skinned, was not without arguments to fortify him in his decision, although he gave way freely to his terrors and desires. In order to prove to himself beyond a doubt that this marriage was an absolute necessity, and that he was at last about to live in perfect happiness, in order to put to flight the vague fears that beset him, he went through all his old calculations

afresh. As his father, the old Jeufosse peasant, was obstinately living on, he reminded himself that he might have to wait a long time for his inheritance ; indeed, that it might never reach him at all, but find its way into the pockets of a cousin of his, a strapping fellow who was content to ply a spade to the entire satisfaction of old Laurent. And he would always be poor, he would have to live in a garret without a wife, with a hard bed every night and a bad dinner every day. Besides, he did not want to have to work all his life ; he was beginning to find his office a fearful bore ; his idle disposition turned the light duties that he had to perform into an intolerable burden. The result of his meditations was always that supreme felicity consists in being able to live without doing anything. Then he remembered that he had drowned Camille in order to marry Thérèse, and live ever after without doing anything. Certainly the prospect of having his mistress all to himself had gone for a good deal in the conception of the crime, but he had been tempted to murder far more perhaps by the hope of taking Camille's place, of being coddled up like him, and of enjoying the same hourly beatitude ; if it had been passion alone that was urging him on, he would not have manifested so much cowardice, so much prudence. The truth was, that he had not hesitated to murder his friend in order to insure a peaceful and lazy existence, and the permanent gratification of his every appetite. All these considerations, avowed or unspoken, flocked back to his mind. He kept repeating to himself, as a consolation, that it was now high time to be enjoying the legitimate advantages of Camille's death. And he displayed to himself the profits, the pleasures of his future existence : he would be able to give up the office, to live in delicious idleness ; he would be able to eat, drink, sleep his fill ; he would always have a loving woman to his hand who would re-establish the even

balance of his blood and his nerves ; soon he would come in for Madame Raquin's forty odd thousand francs, for the poor old woman was dying by inches every day ; in a word, he would secure the happy life of an animal—he would forget everything.

Ever since the marriage had been settled between Thérèse and himself, Laurent thought of scarcely anything but all this ; he even tried to discover further advantages to be gained thereby, and he became quite joyful when he fancied he had found some fresh argument, in the depths of his selfishness, that compelled him to marry the drowned man's widow. But to no avail did he force himself into hope ; to no avail did he dream out a fat future of sloth and voluptuousness ; he still felt sudden shudders that froze his blood, he still experienced, now and then, an anxiety that choked all the exultation in his throat.

CHAPTER XIX.

NEVERTHELESS, Thérèse's and Laurent's machinations were bearing fruit. Thérèse had assumed a sombre and despairing attitude that in a very few days succeeded in making Madame Raquin quite anxious. The old lady insisted on knowing what was the cause of her niece's sadness. Then the young woman played her part of the disconsolate widow with admirable skill; she hinted at worry, depression, nervous attacks, in vague terms, without precisely complaining about anything. When her aunt plied her with questions, she answered that she felt quite well, that she did not know what it was that depressed her so, that she could not account for her fits of weeping. And she went in for a course of stolen sobs, pale heart-breaking smiles, speechless and unutterable despair. The end of it was, that Madame Raquin became seriously alarmed to see the young woman bowed down like this, and, to all seeming, unaccountably fading away; her niece was the only one she had left in the world, and every night she prayed that the child might be spared to close her eyes. There was a touch of selfishness in this last love of her old age. The thought that she might lose Thérèse, and die all alone in the damp shop down the Passage, reminded her keenly of how few were the comforts of her existence. From that moment she watched her niece's every movement, she studied with dread the young woman's every symptom, she spent hours in wondering what she could do to alleviate that silent despair.

Under such serious circumstances, she thought it best to

ask the opinion of her old friend Michaud. One Thursday evening she detained him in the shop, and unbosomed herself of her fears.

“Why, of course!” exclaimed the old man, with professional bluntness, “I have long noticed that Thérèse has got a fit of the sulks, and I know well enough why she looks so pale and miserable.”

“You know the reason?” cried the old lady. “Come, tell me quick! If we could only hope for a cure!”

“Oh! the prescription is simple enough,” returned Michaud, with a laugh. “Your niece is dull because she has been alone of a night in her room these two years past. What she wants is a husband; one can see it in her eyes.”

The ex-commissary of police’s bluntness gave Madame Raquin a painful shock. She had thought that the wound which, ever since the awful accident at Saint-Ouen, was still bleeding within her, had been throbbing just as vividly, just as grievously all the while in the young widow’s heart. After her son’s death she could not conceive the possibility of married life for her niece. And here was Michaud gaily asseverating that Thérèse was ill for want of a husband.

“Marry her off as soon as possible,” he said on his way out, “if you don’t want to see her pine away altogether. That is *my* advice, my dear lady; and it is the best, believe me.”

Madame Raquin could not accustom herself all at once to the idea that her son was already forgotten. Old Michaud had not even mentioned Camille’s name, and he had not scrupled to make Thérèse’s supposed illness a subject for his jokes. The poor mother understood that it was she alone who kept her dear boy’s memory alive in her heart. She wept bitterly; it seemed to her that Camille had just died for the second time. Then, when she had had a good cry,

and was tired out with sorrowing, Michaud's words came back to her, despite herself ; and she tried to accustom herself to the idea of purchasing a little happiness even at the price of a marriage which, to her delicate nature, seemed to be slaughtering her son afresh. It made her quite nervous to find herself in the presence of Thérèse, sad and despondent in the midst of the icy silence of the shop. Hers was none of those stiff and dry characters which seem to take a morbid pleasure in resigning themselves to a life-long despair ; hers was a pliant, devoted, expansive nature—the nature of a good old dame, whose good-humour and affability impel her irresistibly to a life of active kindness. Existence had become intolerable for her ever since her niece had relapsed into silence ; while she was sitting there, pallid and weak, the shop seemed like a tomb ; and Madame Raquin's only desire was to be surrounded with a warm affection, living interests, loving caresses, a bright and gentle something that should enable her to await her death in peace.

It was this unconscious sentiment that led her to entertain the idea of re-marrying Thérèse ; she even at times found herself forgetting her son ; an awakening took place in the dead-alive existence she was leading ; she had lighted upon a new incentive, a fresh occupation for her mind. She was seeking a husband for her niece, and that taxed her mental powers to the full. This choice of a husband was a serious business ; the poor old woman was thinking more of herself than of Thérèse ; she wanted to marry her so as to ensure her own happiness, for she was desperately afraid that the young woman's new husband might prove a disturbing element to the last days of her old age. The thought that she was about to introduce a stranger into her every-day life frightened her, prevented her talking matrimony to her niece as openly as she had intended.

While Thérèse, whose education had made her a past

mistress in all the arts of hypocrisy, was playing the part of a woman bored to death and bowed down with dejection, Laurent had assumed the rôle of a considerate and useful friend. He was always rendering himself necessary to the two women, particularly to Madame Raquin, whom he delighted with his delicate attentions. Little by little he became indispensable in the shop; he alone infused a little gaiety into the gloom of the dingy place. When he did not happen to be there in the evening, the old lady would look about her uneasily, as though she missed something, and almost felt afraid of being left alone with Thérèse's despair. Besides, Laurent never missed an evening except with the object of consolidating his influence. He went to the shop every day on his way back from the office, and stayed there till the Passage gates were closed. He executed all Madame Raquin's commissions, he handed her any little thing she might be wanting, for she could only walk with difficulty. Then he made himself at home; he started a conversation. He discovered a gentle but emotional actor's voice; and he used it to charm the good old lady's heart and ears. Above all, he manifested the deepest interest in Thérèse's health—the interest of a true friend, of a kindly soul who suffers at the sight of another's woe. Several times he took Madame Raquin aside, and horrified her by his expressions of alarm at the alteration, the wasting, that he had noticed in the young woman's face.

“We shall soon be losing her,” he murmured with tears in his voice. “We cannot blind ourselves to the fact that she is very, very ill. Ah, me! our poor lost happiness; our pleasant, quiet little evenings!”

Madame Raquin listened to him in agony. Laurent pushed his audacity so far as to mention Camille by name.

“You see,” he continued, “my poor friend's death was a terrible blow to her. She has been dying by inches these

two years past, ever since the fatal day when she lost Camille. There is no consolation, there is no cure for grief such as hers. We must resign ourselves to the inevitable."

These impudent lies set the hot tears flowing fast from the old lady's eyes. These allusions to her dead son upset and blinded her. Every time she heard Camille's name she burst out sobbing; she gave way to her sorrow; she could have kissed the lips that mentioned her poor child's name. Laurent had not failed to notice that the effect of his name upon her was at once to agitate and to soothe. He was able to make her weep at pleasure, to shatter her with emotions that obscured her clear view of things; and he abused his power in order to keep her always a pliant and ready instrument to his hand. Every evening, notwithstanding the inward repulsion that thrilled through him, he brought round the conversation to Camille's rare qualities, tender heart, and polished wit; he praised his victim up to the skies with the most consummate impudence. Now and then, when he caught Thérèse fixing her eyes strangely upon his, he shuddered, and finished by himself believing all the good he had been saying of the drowned man; then he held his tongue, seized with an access of violent jealousy, and trembled lest the widow should happen to love the man whom he had thrown in the water, and whom he was now praising up with all the conviction of a lunatic. During the whole of the conversation, Madame Raquin was in tears, and could not see for weeping. And while she wept she was thinking that Laurent had a loving and generous heart; he was the only one to give her son a thought; he was the only one to talk of him still with a voice trembling with emotion. Then she wiped away her tears; she gazed upon the young man with an infinite tenderness; she loved him as her own son.

One Thursday evening, Michaud and Grivet were already

in the dining-room when Laurent came in, and, going up to Thérèse, inquired about her health with a tender solicitude. He sat down a moment at her side, and played his part of the affectionate and anxious friend for the benefit of the assembled company. As the young people sat next each other, exchanging a few words, Michaud, who was looking at them, bent over, and, pointing at Laurent, whispered to the old lady :

“ Look there ! That’s the husband for your niece. You ought to bring about the match at once. We will help you, if necessary.”

And Michaud laughed a jolly laugh. In his opinion, what Thérèse wanted was a vigorous husband. A ray of light flashed, as it were, on Madame Raquin. She perceived on a sudden all the advantages which, personally, she would derive from an alliance between Thérèse and Laurent. This marriage would only strengthen the bonds that united them already—herself and her niece—to her son’s friend, to this kind-hearted fellow, who came every evening to cheer them up. In adopting this course, she would not be introducing a stranger into the family, she would run no risk of being unhappy ; on the contrary, while she provided Thérèse with a helpmate, she would, at the same time, be infusing an additional element of gladness into her old age, she would find a second son in the person of this young man, who had manifested a truly filial affection for her for three years past. Then, it seemed to her that in marrying Laurent, Thérèse would be less unfaithful to Camille’s memory. There is an ineffable delicacy in the religion of the heart. Madame Raquin, who would have wept to see the young widow in the arms of a stranger, experienced no repugnance at the thought of entrusting her to the love of her son’s old friend. She was thinking, as the saying has it, that it would not go out of the family.

During the whole evening, while her guests played dominoes, the old lady kept her eyes fixed on the couple with so obvious an emotion that the young man and the young woman soon guessed that their comedy was a success, and that the end was at hand. Before he left, Michaud had a short conversation in undertones with Madame Raquin; then he took Laurent's arm ostentatiously, and announced that he was going to see him home. As Laurent left the room, he exchanged a swift glance with Thérèse, a glance full of urgent import.

Michaud had undertaken to ascertain how matters stood. He found that, though the young man was thoroughly devoted to the ladies in question, he was much surprised at the idea of a marriage between Thérèse and himself. Laurent added, with emotion, that he loved his poor friend's widow like a sister, and that it would seem almost a sacrilege to him to marry her. The ex-commissary of police insisted; he brought forward hundreds of good reasons to gain his point; he even spoke of it as a duty incumbent upon the young man to restore a son to Madame Raquin, and a husband to Thérèse. Little by little, Laurent allowed himself to be convinced; he pretended to give way to emotion, to look upon the idea of this marriage as an idea inspired by Heaven, and, as old Michaud said, dictated by devotion and duty. When Michaud had obtained a formal consent, he rubbed his hands, and left his companion; he thought he had just won a great victory, he congratulated himself on having been the first to arrange a marriage which would restore all their pristine festivity to the Thursday evenings.

Whilst Michaud was carrying on this conversation with Laurent, as they slowly passed along the quays, Madame Raquin was holding forth to Thérèse in almost the same terms. As her niece, pale and weakly as ever, was rising to retire for the night, the old lady detained her a while. She

questioned her in gentle tones, she entreated her to speak frankly, to confess the origin of the apathy which burdened her. Then, as the only replies she could elicit were vague, she spoke of the loneliness of widowhood, she arrived little by little at the definite suggestion of a second marriage, and ended by asking Thérèse, in so many words, whether she was not secretly wishing to marry again. Thérèse began protesting, saying that she had not thought of such a thing, and that she would continue faithful to Camille. Madame Raquin burst into tears. She pleaded against her own feelings, she explained that grief cannot be eternal; at last, in response to the young woman's cry that she could never replace Camille, she abruptly named Laurent. Then she expatiated with a flood of words upon the propriety, the advantages of such a union; she poured out her soul, she repeated aloud the thoughts that had filled her mind all the evening; with the naïvete of selfishness, she drew the picture of her final happiness between her two dear children. Thérèse listened to her with bowed head, docile and resigned, ready to gratify her least wish.

"I love Laurent as a brother," she said sadly, when her aunt came to an end. "Since it is your desire, I will try to love him as a husband. I want to make you happy. I had hoped that you would have left me to weep in peace; but I will dry my tears, since your happiness is at stake."

She kissed the old lady, who was surprised and alarmed at having been the first to forget her son. As she went to bed, Madame Raquin sobbed bitterly, and accused herself of being less courageous than Thérèse, of wishing for a marriage out of selfishness which the young widow was about to accept in a spirit of self-sacrifice.

The next morning, Michaud and his old friend had a short conversation in the Passage, outside the shop-door. They reported to each other the result of the steps they had

taken, and agreed to bring matters to a speedy conclusion, and, that very evening, to force the young people into an engagement.

That evening, at five o'clock, Michaud was already in the shop when Laurent came in. As soon as the young man had sat down, the ex-commissary of police whispered in his ear, "She accepts."

Thérèse overheard this plain language ; she lost none of her pallor, and kept her eyes impudently fixed upon Laurent. The two lovers looked at each other for some moments, as if in consultation. They both understood that they must accept the position without hesitation, and finish with it at a stroke. Laurent rose, and, going up to Madame Raquin, who was doing all she could to keep back her tears, took her hand.

"Dear mother," he said to her with a smile, "I was talking to Monsieur Michaud about your happiness last night. Your children's only wish is to make you happy."

On hearing herself called "dear mother," the poor old woman let flow her tears. With a quick movement she took Thérèse's hand and placed it in Laurent's ; but she could not speak.

A shudder passed through the two lovers at the contact of their flesh. They remained thus a moment with hands clasped and burning in a nervous grip. The young man resumed in hesitating accents :

"Thérèse, are you willing to join me in securing a gay and peaceful existence for your aunt ?"

"Yes," faltered the young woman ; "we have a task to fulfil."

Then Laurent turned towards Madame Raquin, and added, with a pale face :

"When Camille fell into the water, he shouted to me, 'Save my wife ! I entrust her to you ?' In marrying Thérèse, I believe that I am carrying out his last wishes."

Thérèse dropped Laurent's hand when she heard these words. She had received, as it were, a blow in the chest. Her lover's impudence crushed her. She looked at him with dazed eyes, while Madame Raquin, whose sobs almost choked her, stammered :

"Yes, yes, my friend, marry her, make her happy, my son will render you thanks from the bottom of his grave."

Laurent felt himself totter ; he leant on the back of a chair. Michaud, who was also moved to tears, pushed him towards Thérèse, exclaiming :

"Kiss each other, you two ! It will be your betrothal."

The young man was seized with a strange uneasiness when he placed his lips on the widow's cheeks, and she stepped back suddenly as though her lover's two kisses had burnt her. It was the first caress she had received from this man before witnesses ; all the blood rushed to her face, she felt all red and hot, she who did not know what modesty was, and who had never blushed throughout her shameful amours.

After this crisis, the two murderers were able to breathe. Their marriage was settled, they were at last within reach of the goal they had so long had in view. Everything was arranged that very evening. The following Thursday, the wedding was announced to Grivet, to Olivier and his wife. Michaud looked delighted as he told the news ; he kept rubbing his hands, and repeating :

"It was I who thought of it, this match is my work. You will see what a handsome couple they will make !"

Suzanne went up to Thérèse, and kissed her in silence. This poor creature, nerveless and sallow-faced as she was, had taken a fancy to the sombre and stiff young widow. She had a child-like affection for her, mingled with a sort of respectful awe. Olivier congratulated the aunt and the niece. Grivet risked a few spicy jocularities that were but

moderately appreciated. Altogether, the company seemed charmed, delighted, and declared that everything was for the best; truth to tell, the company could already see itself attacking the wedding breakfast.

Thérèse and Laurent maintained their attitude of studied dignity. They manifested a tender and attentive friendship for each other—nothing more. They seemed to be accomplishing an act of supreme self-sacrifice. Nothing in their physiognomy betrayed the fears or the desires which agitated them. Madame Raquin watched them with pale smiles, with a grateful and chastened kindness.

There were some few formalities to carry out. Laurent had to write to his father to obtain his consent. The old Jeufosse peasant, who had almost forgotten that he had a son in Paris, sent him a letter of four lines to tell him he was at liberty to marry and be hanged, if he chose. He gave him to understand that, having resolved never to give him a sou, he left him his own master, and authorised him to commit all the follies in the world. An authorisation couched in such terms as these was remarkably irritating to Laurent.

When Madame Raquin had read this unnatural father's epistle, she had a generous impulse which led her into a very foolish act. She settled on her niece the forty odd thousand francs that she possessed; she completely stripped herself for the young couple, entrusting herself to their good-nature, wishing to owe the whole of her happiness to them. Laurent brought nothing into the partnership; he even hinted that he might ultimately give up his clerkship, and take to painting again. Besides, the future of the little household was assured; the income of the forty odd thousand francs, together with the profits of the haberdashery business, was quite sufficient for three people to live upon. They would have exactly enough to be happy.

The preparations for the wedding were hurried on. The formalities were cut as short as possible. It seemed as if everybody was in a hurry to thrust Laurent into Thérèse's room. The longed-for day arrived at last.

CHAPTER XX.

THAT morning Laurent and Thérèse, in their separate rooms, woke with the same feeling of deep joy; they both said to themselves that their last night of terror was over. They would no longer sleep alone, they would mutually defend each other against the drowned man.

Thérèse looked about her, and smiled a strange smile, as her eyes measured the width of her big bed. She got up, and then dressed slowly, awaiting Suzanne, who was coming to help her with her bridal toilet.

Laurent sat up in bed. He remained in the same position for some minutes, bidding farewell to the garret he found so wretched. At last, then, he was about to leave this hovel, and have a woman to himself. It was December. He was shivering. He leapt to the floor, telling himself that he would feel warm enough that night.

Madame Raquin, knowing how hard up he was, had, a week before, slipped into his hand a purse containing five hundred francs—all her savings. The young man had accepted it without a word, and had invested in a new outfit. Besides, the old lady's money had, in addition, enabled him to purchase the usual presents for the bride.

The black trousers, the coat, as well as the white waistcoat, the shirt and cravat of fine material, were spread out on two chairs. Laurent soaped himself all over, perfumed himself with a bottle of eau de Cologne, and then proceeded to make a careful toilet. He wanted to look well. As he was buttoning his collar—a high, stiff collar—he felt a sharp

pain in his neck ; the collar stud slipped out of his fingers, he got into a rage, the starched linen seemed to be cutting into his flesh. He wanted to see what it was, and raised his chin : then he perceived that the mark of Camille's bite was all red ; the collar had slightly grazed the scar. Laurent set his teeth, and turned pale ; the sight of that stain which discoloured his neck at such a moment frightened and irritated him. He crumpled up the collar, and chose another, which he put on with infinite precautions. Then he finished dressing. When he went down, his new clothes kept him as stiff as a poker ; he dared not turn his head, so imprisoned was his neck in the shiny linen. At each movement he made, a fold of the linen pinched the wound that the drowned man's teeth had scooped out in the flesh. And still suffering these sharp, stinging pains, he got into the carriage and went off to fetch Thérèse and take her to the mayor's and the church.

On his way he picked up a clerk of the Orleans railway, and old Michaud, who were to be his witnesses. When they arrived at the shop everybody was ready : Grivet and Olivier, Thérèse's witnesses, were there, and also Suzanne, who kept looking at the bride like little girls look at the dolls they have just dressed. And although Madame Raquin had entirely lost the use of her legs, she wished to accompany her children everywhere. So she was hoisted into a carriage, and they started off.

Everything went off well at the mayor's and the church. Everybody noticed and approved the calm and modest attitude of the young couple. They uttered the sacramental "Yes" with an emotion which affected even Grivet. They were, as it were, in a dream. Whilst they were so quietly sitting or kneeling at each other's side, wild thoughts arose within them, despite themselves, and made them tremble. When they got back into the carriage, it seemed to

them that they were greater strangers to each other than before.

It had been decided that the wedding feast should be on the quiet, at a little restaurant on the heights of Belleville. The Michauds and Grivet were alone invited. While waiting for six o'clock, the wedding party took a drive along the Boulevards ; then it stopped at the eating-house, where a table, set for seven, stood ready for them in a private room painted yellow, and stinking of dust and wine.

The banquet was but moderately lively. The happy couple were grave and pensive. Ever since the morning they had experienced strange sensations, for which they did not even try to account. From the very first, the rapidity with which the formalities and the ceremonies which united them for ever had been accomplished had bewildered them. Then the long drive on the Boulevards had, as it were, lulled and sent them to sleep ; it seemed to them that the drive had lasted for whole months ; besides, they had allowed themselves to fall, without impatience, into the monotony of the streets, looking at the shops and the passers-by with eyes more dead than alive, overcome by a numbness of feeling which dulled their nerves, and which they tried to shake off with feeble attempts at bursts of laughter. As soon as they had entered the restaurant, an overwhelming fatigue seemed to weigh down their shoulders, an increasing torpor seemed to overpower them.

Placed as they were at table, face to face, they smiled with an air of constraint, and continually relapsed into a deep reverie ; they ate, talked, and moved their limbs like machines. In the midst of the lazy lassitude of their minds, a similar category of fleeting thoughts kept returning unceasingly. They were just married, and they were unable to realise their change of state ; it was a cause of profound astonishment to them. They could not help

thinking that they were separated by the same gulf as before ; at times they found themselves wondering how they could be able to bridge the gulf. It seemed to them that things were as they were before the murder, when a material obstacle was interposed between them. Then, all on a sudden, they remembered that they would be sleeping together that evening in a few hours time ; and then they looked at each other with surprise, no longer understanding why such a thing was permitted to them. They had no comprehension of the fact of their wedlock ; it seemed to them, on the contrary, as if they had just been violently separated and cast far away from each other.

The guests, who were sillily giggling around them, having wished to hear them address each other familiarly, in order to set everybody at ease, they stammered and blushed, they could never make up their minds to behave as lovers in public.

In this long interval their passion had worn itself out, all the past had disappeared. They had lost their violent sensual desires, they had even forgotten their joy on this very morning, that profound joy they had felt at the thought that they would never be afraid again. They were simply wearied and flurried by what was taking place, the events of the day revolved in their minds, incomprehensible and monstrous. They sat there, silent, smiling, without expectation, without hope. A vaguely painful anxiety was agitating them beneath their dejection.

Each time Laurent moved his neck he felt a burning smart biting into his flesh ; his collar scraped and pinched the place where Camille had bitten him. While the civil ceremony was proceeding at the mayor's, while the religious service was going on in the church, at every moment of this long day, he had felt the teeth of his victim penetrating his skin. He sometimes fancied the blood was trickling down

his chest and would stain his white waistcoat with its crimson dye.

Madame Raquin felt privately grateful to the young couple for their gravity; a noisy mirth would have wounded the poor mother; to her it seemed her son was present, though unseen, giving Thérèse to Laurent's care. Grivet had very different notions; he thought the wedding very dull, he vainly tried to enliven the guests, undeterred by the frowns of Michaud and Olivier, which nailed him to his chair every time he wanted to rise to make some silly remark. He did at last succeed, however, in getting on his legs and proposing a toast.

"I drink to the bride's and bridegroom's children," said he in a sprightly tone.

It was necessary to clink glasses. Thérèse and Laurent had turned extremely pale on hearing Grivet's speech. They had never contemplated the idea of having children. An icy shudder passed over them at the thought. They nervously touched glasses, they looked at each other, surprised, alarmed at being there, face to face.

The party rose from table early. The guests wished to escort the bride and bridegroom to the nuptial chamber. It was scarcely half past nine when the wedding party returned to the shop in the Passage. The dealer in sham jewellery was still in her cupboard, behind the box lined with blue velvet. She raised her head inquisitively, looking at the newly-married couple with a smile. They caught her glance and were terrified. Perhaps this old woman had known of their former meetings, when Laurent used to slip through the narrow alley. Thérèse went almost at once to her room, with Madame Raquin and Suzanne. The men remained in the dining-room, while the bride prepared to go to bed. Laurent, depressed and spiritless, did not feel the slightest impatience; he listened politely to the coarse jokes



THE WEDDING FEAST.



of Michaud and Grivet, who were now no longer restrained by the presence of the ladies. When Suzanne and Madame Raquin left the nuptial chamber, and the old lady told the young man in a voice full of emotion, that his bride was awaiting him, he started and stood for a moment terrified ; then he shook hands feverishly all round, and entered Thérèse's room, supporting himself against the door like a drunken man.

CHAPTER XXI.

LAURENT carefully closed the door behind him, and stood leaning against it for a moment, casting an anxious and embarrassed glance round the chamber.

A bright fire blazed on the hearth, throwing out yellow gleams, which danced on the walls and ceiling. The room was thus illuminated with a vivid and changeful light; the lamp, standing on a table, paled before this glow. Madame Raquin had prettily ornamented the room, dressing it in white and filling it with perfume, as a fitting nest for fresh young loves. She had trimmed the bed with lace, and filled the vases on the mantelpiece with large bouquets of roses. A gentle warmth, a pleasant fragrance hung about. The air was peaceful and soothing, laden as it were with a voluptuous torpor. In the midst of the quivering silence came the little sharp noise of crackling wood on the hearth. It seemed a happy solitude, an unknown nook, warm and perfumed, shut off from all sounds of the outer world—one of those nests fitted and arranged to gratify the sensuality of passion and its need of mystery.

Thérèse was seated in a low chair to the right of the chimney-piece. Resting her chin in her hand, she was gazing intently at the leaping flames. She did not turn her head at Laurent's entrance. Clothed in a petticoat and a short night-dress trimmed with lace, she looked ghastly white in the bright firelight. Her night-dress, loose at the neck, was slipping down, disclosing a bit of pink shoulder, half hidden by a tress of raven hair.

Laurent took a few steps without speaking. He removed his coat and waistcoat. When he was in his shirt-sleeves, he again looked at Thérèse, who had not moved. He seemed to hesitate. Then he perceived the bit of shoulder, and he bent down, trembling, to press his lips on this morsel of bare skin. The young woman withdrew her shoulder by turning abruptly round. She fixed on Laurent so strange a look of fright and repugnance that he stepped back, troubled and ill at ease, as though himself seized with terror and disgust.

Laurent sat down opposite Thérèse, on the other side of the fireplace. They remained thus silent, motionless, for five long minutes. Ever and anon the wood emitted jets of lurid flame, casting blood-red reflections upon the murderers' faces.

It was nearly two years since the lovers had found themselves in a room alone together, unrestrained by other eyes. They had had no assignation since the day when Thérèse had gone to the Rue Saint-Victor, bringing Laurent the thought of murder in her wake. A feeling of prudence had weaned their carnal desires. They had scarce permitted themselves, at distant intervals, a pressure of the hand, a stolen kiss. After Camille's murder, when fresh desires were consuming them, they had controlled themselves, awaiting the wedding night, anticipating unbridled pleasure when they could enjoy it with impunity. And the wedding night had come at last, and they sat face to face, anxious, seized with a sudden uneasiness. They had but to stretch out their arms to clasp each other in a passionate embrace, and their arms drooped, as if already wearied and satiated with love. The despondency oppressing them all the day was crushing them more and more. They gazed at each other without desire, with a timid embarrassment, mutually pained at this coldness and silence. Their burning dreams had culminated in a strange reality; it was enough that

they had succeeded in getting rid of Camille, and becoming man and wife; it was enough that Laurent's lips had touched Thérèse's shoulder, for their licentious flame to be quenched in fear and loathing.

Despairingly each sought to kindle some lingering spark of that passion which erst consumed them. They seemed without muscles and without nerves. Their embarrassment, their disquietude increased; they felt ashamed at remaining thus silent and sad. Opposite one another, they longed for the energy to clasp each other madly, to avoid seeming despicable in their own eyes. What! they were now united, they had destroyed a life, and acted an atrocious comedy, in order to be able to impudently wallow in continual pleasure, and there they remained on either side of a fireplace, rigid, exhausted, troubled in mind, dead in body. Such a denouement seemed to them a cruel, horrible mockery. Then Laurent tried to speak of love, to evoke the memory of other days, appealing to his imagination to revive his tenderness.

"Thérèse," said he, leaning towards the young woman, "do you remember our afternoons in this room? I used to come in by that door. To-day I came in by this one. We are free; we can love each other in peace."

He spoke gently, in a hesitating voice. The young woman, squatting on the low chair, continued gazing at the flame, dreamily, without listening. Laurent continued:

"Do you remember? I had a dream: I longed to pass a whole night with you, to fall asleep in your arms, and awake beneath your kisses in the morning. I am going to realise that dream."

Thérèse made a movement as though of surprise at hearing a voice murmuring in her ears. She turned towards Laurent, whose face at the moment was lit up with a ruddy hue by the fire. She looked at this blood-red face and shuddered.



LAURENT AND THÉRÈSE HAUNTED BY CAMILLE'S SPECTRE ON
THEIR WEDDING NIGHT.

The young man resumed, more troubled, more anxious :

“ We have succeeded, Thérèse, we have overcome every obstacle, and we now belong to each other. The future is ours, is it not ?—a future of tranquil happiness, of satisfied love. Camille is no longer in the way.”

Laurent stopped, his throat parched, choking, unable to continue. At the mention of Camille, Thérèse had felt a shock which penetrated her vitals. The two murderers looked at each other, stupefied, pale, trembling. The yellow light from the grate was still dancing on the walls and ceiling ; the warm perfume of the roses hung about ; while the little sharp noise of crackling wood was heard in the silence.

The flood-gates of memory were opened. Camille's spectre came and sat between the bride and bridegroom, in front of the blazing fire. Thérèse and Laurent felt the cold damp breath of the drowned man in the warm air they breathed ; they told themselves a corpse was there between them, and they looked at one another without daring to move. Then all the terrible story of their crime unrolled itself in their memory. The name of their victim sufficed to recall the past, to force them to live over again the anguish of the murder. They did not open their lips, they gazed into each other's eyes, and they had simultaneously the same vision, they both experienced the agony of the same cruel story. This interchange of terror-stricken glances, this mute recital which they were about to give each other of the bloody deed, caused them an acute, intolerable dread. The tension of their nerves threatened an outburst ; they might scream, or even fight. To drive away these memories, Laurent, with a violent effort, tore himself from the terrifying influence of Thérèse's fixed gaze ; he walked up and down the room ; he took off his boots and put on his slippers ; then he returned to his seat in the chimney corner, and tried to converse on indifferent topics.

Thérèse understood his desire. She forced herself to reply to his questions. They spoke of the weather, and of other trite subjects. Laurent declared the room was hot, Thérèse replied that there was a draught under the little door opening on the staircase, and they turned towards the little door with a sudden shiver. The young man hastened to speak of the roses, the fire, everything he could see; the bride made an effort, and found some monosyllables, with which she tried to keep up the conversation. They had moved farther apart; they tried to look unconcerned, to forget their own identity, and to treat each other like strangers casually thrown together.

But in spite of themselves, by a strange phenomenon, while pronouncing empty words, they mutually guessed the thoughts that each was trying to conceal behind commonplace remarks. These thoughts ran persistently on Camille. With their eyes they continued the story of the past; their looks were holding a conversation, mute and sustained, beneath that other conversation kept up aloud, and which dragged on at random. The words they uttered now and again were devoid of meaning, disconnected, and contradictory; their whole being was employed in the silent interchange of their horrible memories. When Laurent spoke of the roses or of the fire, Thérèse understood perfectly well that he was reminding her of the struggle in the boat, of Camille's tragic end; and, when Thérèse replied with yes or no to some trivial question, Laurent understood her to mean that she either remembered or forgot some detail connected with the crime. They thus conversed, heart to heart, without need of words, while talking of other things. Quite unconscious, moreover, of what their tongues said, they followed each other's secret thoughts as fast as they came into their heads; they could have abruptly continued this exchange of reminiscences aloud, without ceasing

to understand each other. This kind of divination, this pertinacity of their memory in unceasingly presenting to their mental gaze the image of their victim, had for them a weird fascination ; they could see they understood each other, and that if they were not silent, the words would rush unbidden from their lips, naming the drowned man, describing the murder. Then they forced themselves to silence, and the conversation dropped.

And yet, in the oppressive stillness that followed, these two murderers continued talking mutely of Camille. They felt as though their gaze mutually pierced their flesh, inserting in them clear and cutting words. At times they fancied they heard each other speaking aloud ; their senses deceived them, their sight seemed to become a strange and delicate sense of hearing ; they so clearly read their thoughts in their faces, that these thoughts assumed a strange and piercing sound which convulsed their frames. They could not have understood each other more plainly had they cried aloud in heartrending tones : “ We have killed Camille, and his corpse is there stretched out between us, freezing our limbs.” And still this exchange of terrible reminiscences continued, more visible, more audible, in the calm, moist atmosphere of the room.

Laurent and Thérèse had begun the silent narrative from the day of their first meeting in the shop. Then the memories had crowded on in order ; they had detailed to each other the hours of voluptuousness, the moments of hesitation and anger, the awful instant of the murder. It was at this point that they had closed their lips, ceasing the trivial talk for fear of suddenly naming Camille without wishing to. And their thoughts, rushing on, had next hurried them to the agony of dread suspense following the crime. They thus arrived mentally at the spectacle of the corpse of the drowned man exposed on a slab at the Morgue.

Laurent told Thérèse all his horror with a look, and Thérèse, losing her self-control, forced by an iron hand to open her lips, abruptly continued the conversation aloud :

“You saw him at the Morgue?” asked she of Laurent, without naming Camille.

Laurent seemed waiting for this question. He had been reading it for a minute past on the young woman’s blanched countenance.

“Yes,” replied he, in hoarse accents.

The murderers shuddered. They drew nearer the fire ; they spread out their hands to the flame, as though an icy breath had suddenly passed through the warm room. They remained silent a moment, cowering, huddled up. Then Thérèse went on in hollow tones :

“Did he appear to have suffered much?”

Laurent could not reply. He made a gesture of fright, as if to drive away some gruesome vision. He arose, went towards the bed, and returned violently, with open arms, towards Thérèse.

“Kiss me,” he said, stretching his neck towards her.

Thérèse had risen, pale and white in her night-dress ; she leant slightly back, one elbow resting on the marble mantelshelf. She looked at Laurent’s neck. On the white skin she had just noticed a pink spot. The surging blood, mounting through his veins, swelled this mark, which grew fiery red.

“Kiss me, kiss me,” repeated Laurent, his face and neck in a flame.

The young woman held her head further back, to avoid a kiss, and, pressing the tip of her finger on the mark left by Camille’s bite, she asked her husband :

“What’s that you’ve got there ? I never noticed you had that wound before.”

Laurent felt as if Thérèse’s finger was piercing his throat.

At the touch of this finger, he shrank back quickly, with a cry of pain.

"That," stammered he, "that—"

He hesitated, but he could not lie; he told the truth in spite of himself.

"You know, it's where Camille bit me in the boat. It's nothing, it's already healed. Kiss me, kiss me!"

And the wretch held his burning neck towards her. He wanted Thérèse to kiss him on the scar, expecting that the kiss of this woman would soothe the thousand stings that were lacerating his flesh. He approached her with his chin raised and his neck towards her. Thérèse, almost reclining on the chimney-piece, made a gesture of supreme disgust, and cried out beseechingly :

"Oh! no, not there! There is blood on it."

She sank down again on the low chair, shuddering, and burying her face in her hands.

Laurent seemed stunned. He lowered his chin and looked vaguely at Thérèse. Then, suddenly, with the grasp of a wild beast, he took her head in his great hands, and, by main force, pressed her lips on his neck on the mark left by Camille's bite. For a brief space he kept, he crushed, that woman's head against his skin. Thérèse had abandoned herself, uttering plaintive cries, feeling nearly suffocated on Laurent's neck. When she had disengaged herself from his hands, she wiped her mouth violently, and spat in the fire. She had not uttered a word.

Laurent, ashamed of his brutality, began pacing the room slowly, from the bed to the window. "It was only the suffering, the horrible smarting which had made him exact a kiss from Thérèse, and, when her cold lips had touched the burning scar, he had suffered still more. This kiss, extorted by violence, had quite shaken him. So painful had been the shock, that nothing would have induced him to

receive a second. And he looked at the woman with whom he was to live, as she sat shivering over the fire, with her back towards him; he told himself that he no longer loved this woman and that she no longer loved him. For nearly an hour Thérèse remained cowering there, while Laurent walked up and down in silence. Both acknowledged to themselves in dismay that their passion was extinct, that in killing Camille, they had killed their own desires. The fire was burning slowly out; a bright red glow covered the ashes. Gradually the heat of the room had become suffocating; the flowers were fading, filling the heavy air with their sickly perfume.

Suddenly Laurent had a hallucination. As he was turning round from the window to the bed, he saw Camille in a dark corner, between the chimney-piece and the glass door of the wardrobe. His victim's face was of a greenish hue and convulsed such as he had seen it on a slab at the Morgue. He stood rooted to the spot, fainting, supporting himself against the furniture. At the stifled cry he uttered, Thérèse looked up.

"There, there," said Laurent, in a terrified voice.

With outstretched arm he pointed to the dark corner in which he perceived Camille's ill-favoured face. Thérèse, also stricken with fear, came and pressed up against him.

"It is his portrait," she whispered, as if her late husband's painted face could hear her.

"His portrait," repeated Laurent, his hair rising on end.

"Yes, you know, the portrait you painted. My aunt was to have had it in her room from to-day. She must have forgotten to remove it."

"Of course, it is only his portrait."

The murderer could scarcely recognise the painting. In his confusion he forgot that he himself had drawn those hard features, represented in dirty tints which terrified him.



LAURENT AND THÉRÈSE, TERRIFIED AT THE SIGHT OF CAMILLE'S
PORTRAIT.

Fright made him see the portrait as it really was, mean, misshapen, discoloured, showing on a dark ground the distorted face of a corpse. His work surprised and horrified him by its atrocious ugliness ; there were especially the two white eyes, floating in soft, yellowish orbits, which reminded him forcibly of the decomposed eyes of the drowned man at the Morgue. He stood gasping, for a few moments, thinking that Thérèse had told a lie to reassure him. Then, recognising the frame, he grew more calm.

“Go and take it down,” said he in low tones to the young woman.

“Oh ! no, I’m afraid,” replied the latter, with a shudder.

Laurent began to tremble again. The frame at times seemed to disappear, and all he saw were the two white eyes, which gazed fixedly at him.

“I entreat you,” he resumed, in supplicating accents to his companion, “go and take it down.”

“No, no.”

“Then we’ll turn it against the wall, and we shall cease to be frightened.”

“No, I really cannot.”

The assassin, cowardly and humble, pushed the young woman towards the canvas, hiding himself behind her to avoid the drowned man’s gaze. She slipped from him, and he tried to put a bold face on the matter ; he approached the picture, raising his hand, seeking the nail. But the portrait had so crushing, so ignoble, so prolonged a look that Laurent, after trying to stare it out of countenance, was vanquished, and drew back, utterly dejected, murmuring :

“No, you are right, Thérèse, we cannot. Your aunt will remove it to-morrow.”

He resumed his walk to and fro, bowing his head, feeling that the portrait was watching him, following him with its eyes. In spite of himself, he glanced from time to time in

the direction of the canvas ; ever, in the deep shadow, gleamed the dead, lack-lustre orbs of the drowned man. The notion that Camille was there, in a corner, watching him, assisting at his wedding night, examining him and Thérèse, drove Laurent nearly wild with terror and despair.

Then too a circumstance, which in another would have caused a smile, sent him completely off his head. As he was passing the fire-place, he heard a sort of scratching noise. He turned pale, fancying this sound came from the portrait, and that Camille was coming out of the frame. But he found that the noise came from the little door opening on to the staircase. He looked at Thérèse who was again giving way to fear.

“ There is someone on the stairs,” he murmured. “ Who can have come that way ? ”

The young woman made no reply. They both thought of the drowned man, an icy cold sweat moistened their brows. They fled to the farthest corner of the room, expecting to see the door burst open, and the corpse of Camille fall on the floor. The noise continuing sharper, and more irregular, they thought their victim was tearing at the wood with his nails, to force an entrance. For nearly five minutes they durst not stir. Then they heard a distinct mewling. Laurent drew near and recognised Madame Raquin’s tabby cat, who had been accidentally shut in the room, and who was trying to escape by shaking the little door with his claws. François was afraid of Laurent ; with one spring he leaped on to a chair ; bristling his coat and stiffening his limbs, he looked at his new master with a hard cruel gaze. The young man hated all cats, but François he was almost afraid of. In his present state of feverish alarm he thought the cat was going to spring at his face to avenge Camille. This animal probably knew all : there must be thoughts in those round eyes, so

strangely dilated. Laurent lowered his eyelids before this dumb animal's fixed gaze. Just as he was on the point of kicking François, Thérèse said:

“Do not hurt him.”

This request made a strange impression upon Laurent. An absurd idea filled his brain.

“Camille has entered into the body of that cat,” he thought. “I must kill the beast. He looks like a human being.”

He did not kick François, dreading to hear the animal address him with Camille's voice. Then he recalled Thérèse's jokes, in the days of their voluptuous meetings, when the cat was a witness of their caresses. He said to himself that this creature knew too much and that he ought to pitch him out of the window. But he had not the courage to accomplish his design. François maintained a hostile attitude; showing his claws, and arching his back in sullen irritation, he followed with superb tranquillity his enemy's slightest movement.

Laurent felt uneasy beneath the gaze of those metallic eyes; he hastened to open the dining-room door, and the cat fled uttering a shrill mew.

Thérèse had resumed her seat in front of the expiring fire. Laurent recommenced his walk from the bed to the window. Thus they awaited the morning. Neither thought of going to bed; heart and flesh were equally numbed. One single longing possessed them, the longing to escape from this room which was stifling them. They felt really uncomfortable at being shut up together, at breathing the same air; they would have preferred a third person to break up their tête-à-tête, to extricate them from the cruel embarrassment of finding themselves there with nothing to say, unable to resuscitate their passion. Their long intervals of silence tortured them; these intervals were full of bitter

and despairing complaints, of mute reproaches, which they heard distinctly in the stillness of the night.

Morning came at last, pale and murky, bringing a penetrating chill in its train.

As soon as the early light filled the room, Laurent who was shivering grew more calm. He looked straight at Camille's portrait, and saw it as it really was, crude and puerile; he unhooked it, and, shrugging his shoulders, called himself a fool. Thérèse had risen and was rumpling the bed-clothes to deceive her aunt, and make her think they had passed a happy night.

"I hope," said Laurent roughly, "that we shall sleep properly to-night. This childishness cannot go on."

Thérèse looked at him gravely and thoughtfully.

"You understand," he added, "I did not marry to pass sleepless nights. We have behaved like children. It was you who upset me with your funereal ways. To-night you must try to be cheerful and not to frighten me."

He gave a forced laugh without knowing why.

"I will try," replied the young woman in a hollow voice. Such was Thérèse's and Laurent's wedding night.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE nights following were still more cruel. The murderers had wished to be two at night, to defend themselves against the drowned man, and, strange to tell, directly they found themselves together, they trembled more than ever. The mere interchange of a look, of a word, sufficed to exasperate them, to irritate their nerves in the highest degree, to bring on terrible paroxysms of suffering and terror. The simplest conversation, the most trivial tête-à-tête between them was the signal for a species of delirium.

Thérèse's hard nervous nature had acted strangely on Laurent's dull, sanguine temperament. In the days of their passionate love this great contrast between the man and the woman had made them a couple powerfully united, establishing a sort of equilibrium between them, by completing, so to speak, their organism. The lover brought his blood, his mistress her nerves, and they lived in each other, mutually yearning for the caresses which regulated the mechanism of their being. But this machinery was now out of gear ; Thérèse's over-excited nerves were in the ascendant. Laurent suddenly found himself a prey to a state of nervous erethism ; under the young woman's ardent influence, his temperament had gradually become that of a girl stricken with an acute neurosis. It would be curious to study the changes which are sometimes produced in certain organizations, resulting from definite circumstances. These changes

which start from the flesh, soon communicate themselves to the brain, and from thence to the entire being.

Before meeting Thérèse, Laurent had the heavy nature, the quiet prudence, the sanguine temperament, of a son of the soil. He ate, drank, and slept as an animal. At all hours, under all circumstances, he breathed heavily and plentifully, satisfied with himself, and slightly stultified by his superabundant flesh. He had scarcely felt at times slight titillations in his thick frame. And it was these titillations that Thérèse had developed into horrible shocks. She had set in motion in this large, fat, and sluggish body, a nervous system of extraordinary sensibility. Laurent, who previously had enjoyed life more through his blood than his nerves, grew less coarse in his feelings. His mistress's first kisses suddenly revealed to him a new existence, poignant and nervous. This existence increased his enjoyments tenfold, gave so acute a character to his pleasures that he seemed at first to have nearly lost his senses; he abandoned himself utterly to this acme of intoxication, which his blood had never procured him. Then a strange evolution took place within him; his nerves developed, dominated the sanguine element, and this fact alone modified his nature. He lost his phlegmatic heaviness; he no longer led a sleepy life. The day came when the blood and the nerves were evenly balanced; that was a moment of profound enjoyment and perfect existence. Soon the nerves gained the mastery, and he suffered the tortures which rack disordered bodies and minds.

Thus it was that Laurent had cowered at a shadowy corner, like a timid child. The trembling, haggard creature, the new being which had evolved itself in him from the thick-skinned, heavy peasant, suffered the fears and anxieties of nervous temperaments. All the late events—Thérèse's fierce caresses, the excitement of the murder, the frightful

period of waiting—had nearly driven him mad by over-exciting his senses, and by abrupt and repeated strains upon his nerves. The sleeplessness was a fatal climax, bringing hallucination in its train. From that time Laurent had led an intolerable life, struggling against an eternal terror.

His remorse was purely physical. His body, his irritated nerves and trembling flesh were alone in fear of the drowned man. His conscience was in nowise concerned with his terrors; he did not in the least regret having killed Camille. In his calm moments, when the spectre was not haunting him, he would have committed the murder over again, if he had thought his interest required him to do so. In the daytime he laughed at his fears; he resolved to be brave; he rebuked Thérèse, whom he accused of alarming him. According to his account, it was Thérèse who trembled; it was Thérèse alone who brought about appalling scenes, of an evening, in their room. And as soon as night came, as soon as he was shut in with his wife, a cold sweat came out upon his skin, childish fears pursued him. He thus suffered periodical crises, nervous attacks which returned every evening, which upset his senses by showing him the green, putrid face of his victim. They were like severe attacks of serious illness, a sort of hysteria of murder. An illness, a nervous affection was really the only term to apply to these terrors of Laurent. His face became convulsed, his limbs grew stiff. One could see his nerves becoming knotted. His body suffered acutely, his soul was undisturbed. The wretch felt no twinge of repentance. Thérèse's passion had filled him with a horrible agony, and that was all.

Thérèse herself was also a prey to violent agitation. But in her case the original temperament had merely become unnaturally intensified. Ever since she was ten years old, this woman had been subject to nervous disorders, partly attributable to the way she had been reared in the tepid,

nauseous air of the room in which little Camille had struggled to live. Meanwhile storms were accumulating in her—powerful fluids which were bound to burst forth eventually in veritable tempests. Laurent had been for her what she had been for Laurent—a sort of brutal shock. From the first embrace of her lover, her hard, yet voluptuous temperament had developed with a savage energy. She had then only lived for her passion. Abandoning herself more and more to the fevers which consumed her, she fell at last into a kind of sickly stupor. Events overwhelmed her; everything drove her to madness. In her terror she showed her woman's nature; she felt a vague remorse and an unavowed regret; she experienced a longing to throw herself on her knees and implore pardon of Camille's spirit swearing to appease him by repentance. Perhaps Laurent perceived this cowardice in Thérèse. When they were agitated by a mutual terror, he abused her and treated her brutally.

They could not go to bed those first nights. They watched for the dawn of day, sitting by the fire, or walking up and down, like on the wedding night. The idea of lying side by side on the bed filled them with a sort of alarm and repugnance. By tacit consent they avoided caresses, not ever looking at the bed which Thérèse rumbled in the morning. When overtaken by fatigue, they slept for an hour or two in easy-chairs, to awake with a start at the fatal denouement of some nightmare. At daylight, with stiffened, tired limbs and faces mottled with livid blotches, all shivering with cold and discomfort, they gazed stupidly at one another astonished to find themselves there, full of strange embarrassment at the situation, of shame at the disclosure of their mutual terror and disgust.

They struggled, moreover, as hard as they could, against sleep. They sat at either side of the fire-place and chattered

of a thousand trifles, carefully avoiding a lull in the conversation. There was a wide space between them, opposite the hearth. When they turned their heads, they imagined that Camille had brought a chair over and occupied this space, warming his feet in a lugubriously jeering manner. This vision, which had come to them on their wedding night, returned every night afterwards. This corpse, which assisted, silent and scornful, at their vigils, this frightfully disfigured body, which seemed to be ever there, plunged them in a continual alarm. They durst not stir; they blinded themselves staring at the burning flames, and when involuntarily they cast a timid glance aside, their eyes, irritated by the glowing coal, created the vision and gave it lurid reflections.

Laurent would not, at last, sit down, though concealing the cause of his whim from Thérèse. She understood perfectly that Laurent saw Camille as she did; she declared in her turn that the heat was stifling, that she would feel better some distance from the fire. She moved her arm-chair to the foot of the bed, and remained there exhausted, while her husband resumed his pacing up and down the room. At times he would open the window, and let the cold January nights fill the room with their icy breath. This calmed his fever.

For a week, the newly wedded pair thus passed the entire nights. They were worn out; they dozed a little during the day—Thérèse behind the counter in the shop, Laurent at his office. At night they were a prey to anguish and terror. And the strangest thing of all was the attitude they maintained towards each other. They uttered not one word of love; they pretended to have forgotten the past; they seemed to accept, to tolerate each other, as invalids feeling a secret pity for their common sufferings. They each hoped to conceal their disgust and their fears, and neither of them seemed aware of the strangeness of the nights they passed

together, and which should have mutually enlightened them on the true state of their feelings. Sitting up all night, conversing at long intervals, starting at the slightest sound, they seemed to believe their conduct was like that of all young couples in their honeymoon. It was the clumsy hypocrisy of two fools.

But their weariness became at length so overpowering that they made up their minds one night to lie down on the bed. They did not undress ; they threw themselves on the outside of the counterpane, fearing lest their flesh should come in contact. They seemed to dread some painful shock at the least touch. After sleeping an unquiet sleep in this way for two nights, they ventured to undress and to slip between the sheets. But they kept at either edge of the bed ; they took precautions not to touch each other. Thérèse got in first, and lay close to the wall. Laurent waited until she was settled ; then he ventured to stretch his limbs at the outer side. This left a wide space between them. There reposed the corpse of the drowned man.

When the two murderers were stretched beneath the same sheet, and had closed their eyes, they seemed to feel their victim's dripping body in the middle of the bed, freezing their flesh. It was like some ghastly obstacle separating them. They were in a fever, a delirium, and this obstacle became to them a real thing ; they touched the body ; they saw it laid out, like a piece of green and putrid flesh ; they inhaled the offensive odour of this mass of human corruption. The illusion so overpowered them that their sensations became intolerably acute. The presence of this loathsome bed-fellow held them immovable, silent, devoured with anguish. Laurent sometimes thought of violently taking Thérèse in his arms ; but he was too frightened to move ; he told himself he could not stretch out his hand without catching hold of Camille's dank flesh. Then he imagined

the corpse came and lay between them to prevent their gliding into each other's arms. He ended by understanding that the drowned man was jealous.

Sometimes, however, they tried to exchange a timid kiss to see what would happen. The young man made fun of his wife and ordered her to embrace him. But their lips were so cold, that death seemed to have stepped in between their mouths. They felt sick; Thérèse shuddered with horror, and Laurent, who could hear her teeth chattering, got out of temper with her.

"Why are you trembling?" he would ask. "Are you afraid of Camille? Nonsense, by this time there is no flesh left even on the poor fellow's bones."

They avoided telling each other the cause of their shivering fits. When in a vision the leaden-hued face of their victim appeared before one of them, he closed his eyes, shutting himself up in his terror, not daring to tell the other, for fear of causing a still more terrible climax. When Laurent, driven to extremity, in a fit of despair, accused Thérèse of being afraid of Camille, this name, uttered aloud, redoubled his agony. The murderer raved in delirium.

"Yes, yes," he would stammer, addressing the young woman, "you are afraid of Camille. I can see it well enough! You are a fool, you have not a spark of courage. Go and sleep in peace! Do you suppose your first husband is going to drag you off by your feet, because I'm in bed with you?"

This idea, this supposition that the drowned man could come and drag them by their feet made Laurent's hair stand on end. He continued, however, with more violence:

"I must take you some night to the cemetery. We will open Camille's coffin, and you shall see the mass of corruption! Then you will get over your fear perhaps. Non-

sense, what does he know of our having thrown him into the water?"

Thérèse, her head buried in the sheets, uttered stifled cries.

"We drowned him to get rid of him," continued her husband. "We would do it again, eh? Then don't play the fool like that. Take courage. It is foolish to spoil our happiness. You see, my dear, when we die, we shall not be a bit better or worse off in the ground, because we chucked an idiot into the Seine, and we shall have had liberty to enjoy our love, which is an advantage. Come, kiss me."

The young woman, icy cold and distracted, kissed him, while he was shivering all over as she was.

For over a fortnight Laurent tried to think how he could kill Camille over again. He had drowned him, and yet he was not dead enough, for he came and lay every night in Thérèse's bed. When the murderers thought to have got rid of him, and to be able to give themselves up in peace to the enjoyment of their passion, their victim appeared again to freeze their bridal bed. Thérèse was no widow, and Laurent found himself married to a woman who had already a drowned man for a husband.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LAURENT was gradually driven to the brink of madness. He resolved to drive Camille from his bed. He had begun by lying down without undressing, then he had avoided even touching Thérèse's skin. Now, enraged, desperate, he wished at last to take his wife to his bosom, and to crush her in his arms, rather than leave her to his victim's ghost. It was a superb revolt of brutish passion.

In short, the hope that Thérèse's kisses would cure his sleeplessness had alone brought him to her bedchamber. When he had found himself in this room as master, his flesh, rent by still more atrocious shocks, had no longer even thought of attempting the cure. And during three weeks he remained as though crushed, forgetting he had done all to possess Thérèse and unable to touch her without adding to his sufferings, now that she was all his own.

The excess of his anguish roused him from this lethargy. In the first moment of stupor, in the strange dejection of the wedding night, he had somehow overlooked the reasons which had urged him to bring about the marriage. But from behind the reiterated shocks of his bad dreams, a dull irritation came over him conquering his cowardice and restoring his memory. He recollected he had married in order to chase away his nightmare with his wife pressed to his breast. So one night, he suddenly took Thérèse in his arms, and drew her violently to him, at the risk of passing over the body of the drowned man.

The young woman was also at the end of her patience ;

she would have thrown herself into the flames if she could have believed the fire would purge her flesh and deliver her from her woes. She returned Laurent his embraces, resolved to be burnt by this man's caresses, or to find in them a consolation.

And they were locked in a horrible embrace. Agony and terror replaced sensual desire. When their limbs touched each other, they felt as if they had fallen on burning coals. They uttered a cry and clung yet closer together, so as to leave no room between their bodies for the drowned man. And still they felt bits of Camille's flesh loathsomely crushed between them, freezing their skin in places while the rest of their bodies was on fire.

Their embraces were frightfully cruel. Thérèse sought with her lips the mark of Camille's bite on Laurent's stiff and swollen neck, and she passionately fixed her mouth upon it. The festering sore was there; once that wound were healed, the murderers might sleep in peace. The woman understood this, she tried to cauterise the place with the heat of her caresses. But she only burnt her lips, and Laurent pushed her violently from him with a moan of pain; it seemed to him that a red-hot iron was being applied to his neck. Thérèse, beside herself, returned to him, wishing again to kiss the scar; she experienced a keen voluptuousness in placing her mouth on that skin wherein Camille had buried his teeth. At one moment she even thought of biting her husband at that spot, of tearing out a large piece of flesh, of making a new and deeper wound, which should carry away all marks of the old one. And she felt she would not then turn pale at the sight of the mark of her own teeth. But Laurent defended his neck from her kisses; he felt it smarting unbearably, he pushed her away each time she thrust out her lips. They struggled thus, disputing, quarrelling amid the horror of their caresses.

They felt well enough they were but increasing their sufferings. In vain did they clasp each other in terrible embraces, they cried out with pain, they burnt and bruised each other, but they could not soothe their terrified nerves. Each embrace only increased the acuteness of their disgust. Whilst they were exchanging these frightful kisses, they were a prey to ghastly hallucinations; they imagined the drowned man was pulling their feet, and violently shaking the bed.

They let go of each other a moment, filled with disgust and an invincible nervous antipathy. But they would not be vanquished; they once more clasped each other in a new embrace, and were yet again forced to loosen their hold by what seemed like red-hot darts piercing their limbs. Many times they tried thus to conquer their disgust, and to forget everything by wearying, by shattering, their nerves. And each time their nerves grew more irritated and strained, causing them such exasperation that they must have died of collapse had they continued in each other's arms. This struggle with their own bodies had excited them to the point of fury; they grew obstinate, they resolved to have their own way. At length a still sharper attack shattered them; they received a shock of unheard-of violence, and they believed it was all over with them.

Flung apart to the two edges of the bed, scorched and bruised, they began to sob.

And, mingling with their sobs, they seemed to hear the jeering laugh of the drowned man, who again slipped in under the sheet in triumph. They had been powerless to chase him from the bed; they were vanquished. Camille stretched himself gently between them, while Laurent wept at his powerlessness, and Thérèse trembled to think the corpse might take a fancy to profit by his victory and clasp her in his turn in his putrid arms as her legitimate lord

They had tried a supreme remedy; they felt that, in presence of their defeat, they would never again dare to exchange the slightest caress. The sensual passion which they had tried to force in order to quell their terrors, had just plunged them into still deeper dread. Feeling the icy presence of this corpse which would now separate them forever, they wept tears of blood, asking themselves in their anguish what would become of them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE Thursday evenings were gaily resumed, the day after the wedding, as old Michaud had hoped, when he worked so hard to bring about the marriage of Thérèse and Laurent. These gatherings seemed doomed at the time of Camille's death. The guests only ventured to present themselves timidly in the house of mourning ; each week they trembled to receive a final dismissal. Michaud and Grivet were such creatures of habit that they thought of the possibility of Madame Raquin's door being closed against them with feelings of apprehension. They feared that the old mother and the young widow would go off one fine morning to mourn the dear departed at Vernon or elsewhere, and that they would thus be stranded on Thursday evenings, not knowing what to do with themselves ; they saw themselves in fancy wandering helplessly about the Passage, dreaming of gigantic games at dominoes. While awaiting these evil days, they timidly enjoyed their last pleasures, coming with a gentle troubled manner to the shop, repeating each time that perhaps they might not return. For more than a year they felt this uneasiness, they did not dare to laugh and joke in presence of Thérèse's silence and Madame Raquin's tears. They did not feel so much at home as in Camille's life time ; they seemed as if they stole each evening they passed around the dining-room table. It was under these desperate circumstances that old Michaud's selfishness prompted him to make a master-stroke in finding a husband for the young widow.

On the first Thursday after the wedding, Grivet and Michaud made a triumphal entry. They had conquered. The dining-room was once more free to them, they no longer feared a polite dismissal. They arrived radiant, they lounged about, they repeated one after the other all their old jokes. One could see by their happy, confident attitude that for them a great change had taken place. Camille's memory no longer troubled them; the dead husband, that spectre which had frozen them, had been banished by the living husband. The past was revived with all its joys. Laurent replaced Camille, all reason for grief had disappeared, the guests could laugh without causing pain to anyone, and it was even their duty to laugh, to enliven the excellent family who were so kind as to receive them. From that time, Grivet and Michaud, who for about eighteen months had called, under the pretext of consoling Madame Raquin, could put aside their little hypocrisy, and come openly to fall asleep opposite each other, to the sharp sound of the dominoes.

And each week brought its Thursday evening, each week gathered once around the table these grotesque and lifeless heads which used formerly to exasperate Thérèse so much. She now talked of getting rid of them all; they irritated her with their silly laughs and stupid remarks. But Laurent showed her that such a dismissal would be a mistake; they should study to make the present as much as possible resemble the past, above all must they preserve the friendship of the police, of those idiots who protected them from all suspicion. Thérèse yielded; the guests, well treated, saw before them with delight a long interminable succession of pleasant evenings.

It was about this time that the lives of the young couple seemed to diverge in a measure.

Every morning, as soon as daylight had chased away the

terrors of the night, Laurent dressed himself in all haste, He was not at his ease, he did not resume his selfish calm until he found himself in the dining-room, seated before a large bowl of coffee, which Thérèse prepared for him. Madame Raquin, growing very infirm, and hardly able to go down to the shop, watched him drink it with a maternal smile. He swallowed slices of toasted bread, he stuffed his stomach full, he gained courage by degrees. After his coffee, he drank a small glass of brandy That completely set him up. Then after saying "Good-bye till this evening," to Madame Raquin and Thérèse, without ever offering to kiss them, he strolled off to his office. Spring came, the leaves covered the trees on the quays with a light lace-work of tender green. The river flowed beneath, with a caressing sound ; the sun shone above with a gentle warmth. Laurent felt that the fresh air gave him new life ; he drank it in deeply under those April and May skies ; he sought the sunny side, he lingered by the Seine to watch the silvery reflections upon its waters, listening to the sounds on the quays, inhaling the pungent odours of the morning, enjoying through every sense the clear and lovely days. He scarcely ever thought of Camille ; sometimes though he mechanically contemplated the Morgue, from the other side of the water, and it was then he would pluckily think of the drowned man with a feeling of contempt for his former fears.

With a full stomach, and a clean face, he recovered his heavy tranquillity, arrived at his office, and passed the entire day there, yawning and waiting for the hour of dismissal. He was nothing but a clerk like the others, bored, empty-headed. His sole fixed idea at this time was to leave his present employment and to hire a studio. He had vague dreams of a new life of idleness, and this was enough to occupy his mind until the evening. Not once was he troubled with a thought of the shop in the Passage. In the

evening, after having longed since the morning for the hour of dismissal, he left the office reluctantly, returning along the quays with a vague feeling of disquiet. In vain did he walk slowly, the shop must be reached sooner or later. And there, terror awaited him.

Thérèse experienced the same sensations. So long as Laurent was not with her she felt at ease. She had dismissed the charwoman, saying that the work was sadly neglected, that everything was dirty both in the shop and in the rooms. Thoughts of keeping things in order came to her. The real truth was that she felt impelled to walk, to act, to tire out her stiffened limbs. She was busy the whole morning, sweeping, dusting, cleaning the rooms, washing up the plates and dishes, doing work that would have disgusted her in former times. From early morning until noon, these household duties kept her on her legs, active and silent, giving her no time for other thoughts than the cobwebs hanging from the ceiling, and the grease on the dirty plates. Then she went to the kitchen to prepare the lunch. At table, Madame Raquin was worried at seeing her constantly jump up to change the plates and fetch the dishes. She was concerned and annoyed by the activity displayed by her niece. She scolded her, and Thérèse replied that economy was necessary.

After the meal the young woman would dress herself, and at length join her aunt behind the counter. There, drowsiness overcame her. Worn out with sleepless nights, she dozed off, yielding to the voluptuous torpor which seized upon her as soon as she was seated. These were only light slumbers, full of a vague charm, which calmed her nerves. The thought of Camille was banished. She tasted the profound repose of sick people who suddenly lose their pain. She felt her flesh relaxed, her mind relieved, plunged into a soft, refreshing lethe. Had it not been for these moments

of rest, her organism must have broken down under the tension of her nervous system. She derived from them the strength necessary to suffer pain and terror on the following night. Besides, she did not really sleep, she hardly closed her lids, sunk in a peaceful dream. When a customer came in she opened her eyes, served the few sous' worth of whatever was required, and then relapsed into her floating reverie.

She would thus pass three or four hours, perfectly happy, replying in monosyllables to her aunt, giving herself up with real enjoyment to the swoons which banished thought and sank her into oblivion. She rarely even glanced down the Passage, feeling herself especially at ease in cloudy weather, when everything was dim and she could hide her lassitude in the depths of the shadow. The damp loathsome Passage, used by a crowd of poor wet devils whose umbrellas dripped on the flagstones, seemed to her the entrance to some bad place, a kind of dirty corridor of evil omen, where no one would come to seek or trouble her. Sometimes, on beholding the dull glimmer hovering about her, and smelling the peculiar odour of the dampness, she would imagine she had been buried alive; she would fancy herself deep down under ground, in a common grave swarming with corpses. And this thought soothed her, comforted her; she felt safe then, at the point of death, which was about to end her sufferings.

At other times she had to keep her eyes open; Suzanne would pay her a visit and sit beside the counter with her embroidery the whole afternoon. Olivier's wife, with her soft face and slow gestures, now quite pleased Thérèse who found a strange consolation in watching this poor creature as she gradually wasted away; she had made a friend of her, she liked having her there, smiling with a pale smile, living a half life, pervading the shop

with the faint odour of a cemetery. When Suzanne looked at her with those blue eyes of glassy transparency, she felt a cold beneficent thrill pass through her frame. Thérèse would remain thus till four o'clock. Then she returned to the kitchen, she sought fresh fatigue, and prepared Laurent's dinner with feverish haste. But when her husband appeared on the threshold, a lump came in her throat, and her whole being again writhed with anguish.

Day after day the sensations of the couple were much the same. During the daytime, when they were apart, they tasted hours of delicious repose; in the evening, as soon as reunited, they were filled with poignant uneasiness.

They had, however, quiet evenings. Thérèse and Laurent, who shuddered at the thought of going to their room, sat up as long as possible. Madame Raquin, reclining in a large lounge chair, was placed between them, and chatted away with her placid voice. She talked of Vernon, thinking ever of her son, but avoiding his name from a feeling of delicacy; she smiled at her dear children, she made plans for their future. The lamp cast pale gleams on her white face; her voice assumed a wonderful softness in the death-like, silent air. And seated on either side, the two murderers, silent, motionless, seemed quietly listening to her; in reality, they made no attempt to follow the sense of the old lady's chatter, they were simply happy at this sound of soft words, which drowned in them the voices of their thoughts. They dared not look at each other, they looked at Madame Raquin to give themselves countenance. They never spoke of retiring to rest, they would have remained there until morning, with the old woman's caressing twaddle ringing in their ears, in the peacefulness which she created around her, if she had not herself expressed a wish to get to her bed. Not till then did they leave the dining-room and retire, in despair, to their chamber to throw themselves into the depths of an abyss.

To these quiet evenings they soon infinitely preferred the Thursday gatherings. When they were alone with Madame Raquin, they could not shake off their thoughts ; the thin thread of the aunt's voice, her tender gaiety could not stifle the cries which were rending them. They felt the hour approaching when they must go to bed, they trembled when, by accident, their eyes met on their bed-room door ; the waiting for the moment when they would be alone became more and more cruel as the evening wore on. Whereas, on the Thursdays, they were brimful of nonsense, they each forgot the other's presence, they suffered less. Thérèse herself began, at last, to ardently long for the reception days.

If Michaud and Grivet had not come, she would have gone to fetch them. When there were strangers in the dining-room between her and Laurent she felt more calm ; she would have liked to have always had guests there, with plenty of noise, anything that would distract her thoughts, and isolate her. In society she displayed a sort of nervous gaiety. Laurent, too, brought out his clownish jokes, his hearty laughs, his studio witticisms. The receptions had never been so gay or so noisy.

Thus Laurent and Thérèse were able to meet, once a week, without trembling.

A new alarm soon overtook them. Paralysis was making rapid strides with Madame Raquin, and they foresaw the day when she would be fixed in her arm-chair, impotent and stupefied. The poor old woman began to stammer forth disconnected phrases ; her voice grew weaker, her limbs were dying one by one. She was becoming a *thing*. Thérèse and Laurent watched with terror the decay of this being who separated them still, and whose voice drew them away from their bad dreams. When Madame Raquin's mind failed and she remained silent and motionless in her arm-chair, they would find themselves alone ; in the evenings

they would no longer be able to escape the dreaded tête-à-tête. Then their horrors would begin at six o'clock instead of at midnight ; they would go mad.

They used every effort to preserve to Madame Raquin a health which to them was so precious. They had medical advice, they were full of little attentions, they even found in this new occupation of sick-nursing a forgetfulness, a peacefulness which made them redouble their zeal. They wished on no account to lose a third presence which made their evenings just bearable ; they dreaded the dining-room and the whole house becoming haunted like their own room. Madame Raquin was deeply touched by their unremitting attentions ; she tearfully congratulated herself at having united them and given up to them her forty and odd thousand francs. Her son being dead, she had never hoped for such devotion in her last hours ; her helpless old age was quite softened by the tenderness of her dear children. She scarcely felt the implacable paralysis which, notwithstanding, was creeping upon her day by day.

Meanwhile Thérèse and Laurent lived their dual existence. In each there were, so to say, two distinct beings : one nervous and terrified, who trembled at the approach of night, the other numbed and forgetful, who breathed freely with the first rays of the sun. They led two lives, they cried with anguish when alone, they smiled tranquilly when in company. Never, before others, did their countenances betray the sufferings to which they were a prey in private ; they then appeared calm and happy, instinctively concealing their woes.

Judging from their serenity during the day, no one could have suspected the visions which tortured them at night. They were looked upon as a happy pair, blessed by Heaven, living in perfect bliss. Grivet gallantly called them "the turtle-doves." When their eyes had dark rims through pro-

longed sleeplessness, he chaffed them, and asked when the baptism would be. And everyone laughed. Laurent and Thérèse scarcely turned pale, and managed to smile; they grew accustomed to the old clerk's rather broad jokes. As long as they remained in the dining-room they could master their fears. No one would have guessed the frightful change produced in them, as soon as they were shut up together in their bed-room. On Thursday evenings especially, this contrast was so brutally violent that it had the effect of something supernatural. The drama of their nights, by its weirdness, by its savage fury, surpassed all belief and remained hidden in the depths of their agonized beings. Had they given it utterance they would have been set down as raving maniacs.

“How happy those young lovers are!” was old Michaud's frequent remark. “They do not talk much, but they think the more. I bet they devour each other with caresses when we are no longer there to see.”

This was the general opinion. Thérèse and Laurent were held up as a model pair. The whole Passage du Pont-Neuf admired the affection, the tranquil happiness, the eternal honeymoon of the young couple. They alone knew that Camille's corpse lay stretched between them; they alone felt beneath the calm exterior of their faces those nervous contractions which, at night, horribly distorted their features and changed the placid expression of their faces into a couple of loathsome and woeful masks.

CHAPTER XXV.

FOUR months after his marriage, Laurent resolved to reap the material benefit that was to be derived from it. He would have deserted his bride and fled from the spectre of Camille three days after the wedding, if self-interest had not held him to the shop in the Passage. He accepted his nights of terror, he remained on the scene of the anguish which stifled him, in order not to lose the profits of his crime. If he left Thérèse, he would be plunged in poverty, and forced to retain his situation ; by remaining with her, he could, on the contrary, gratify his idle nature, and live luxuriously while doing nothing, on the money which Madame Raquin had invested in his wife's name. It is more than probable that he would have bolted with the forty thousand francs, if he had had the power of realizing them ; but the old woman, with Michaud's advice, had taken the precaution of settling them on her niece. Laurent found himself, in consequence, joined to his wife by a very potent tie. As a compensation for his atrocious nights, he wished at least to revel in a happy indolence, well fed, well clothed, and with money in his pocket to satisfy every whim. At this price only he consented to sleep with the drowned man's corpse.

One evening he told Madame Raquin and his wife that he had resigned his post, and would leave the office at the end of the fortnight. Thérèse showed her uneasiness. He hastened to add that he was going to hire a little studio, where he would resume painting. He expatiated on the tedium of his present employment, on the vast possibilities

opened to him by art. Now that he had a little money in his pocket, and could make a bid for success, he would see if he was not capable of great things. The tirade which he declaimed on this subject merely hid a wild longing to resume his old artist life.

Thérèse sat silent, with lips compressed. She had no intention that Laurent should waste the modest fortune which ensured her independence. When her husband pressed her with questions, so as to obtain her consent, she replied very sharply. She gave him to understand that if he left his office he would be earning nothing, and living entirely at her expense. While she spoke, Laurent looked at her with such an evil expression that she was quite upset, and the refusal she was about to utter stuck in her throat. She thought she could read in her accomplice's eyes this awful threat: "I will confess all if you do not consent." She stammered out something vague. Madame Raquin then explained that her dear son's wish was very laudable, and that he ought to be provided with the means of developing his talent. The good woman spoilt Laurent as she had spoilt Camille. She was quite won by the caresses the young man lavished on her; she belonged to him, and always agreed with what he said.

So it was settled that the artist should hire a studio, and receive a hundred francs a month for necessary outlay. The family budget was regulated as follows:—The profits of the haberdashery business would pay the rent of the shop and rooms, and almost suffice for the daily household expenses. Laurent would take the rent of his studio and his hundred francs a month out of the two thousand and odd francs of income; the remainder of this income would be applied to the general family expenses. In this way the capital would remain intact. Thérèse became more easy. She made her husband swear that he would never go beyond his allow-

ance. And then she consoled herself with the thought that Laurent could not touch her forty thousand francs without her signature, and she was determined not to sign any paper.

As early as the following day, Laurent hired a small studio, which he had had his eye upon for a month past, towards the bottom of the Rue Mazarine. He was resolved not to give up his present work without having a haven where he could spend his days quietly away from Thérèse. At the end of the fortnight, he bade adieu to his fellow-clerks. Grivet was amazed at his departure. A young man, said he, who had such a brilliant future before him—a young man who, in four years, had attained the position in the office that he, Grivet, had toiled for twenty years to achieve! Laurent astonished him still more when he informed him that he was going to devote himself entirely to painting.

At length the artist was installed in his studio. This studio was a sort of square attic, five or six yards either way; the ceiling sloped abruptly with a sharp incline, and was pierced by a broad window, which admitted a glaring white light on the floor and on the blackish walls. The noises of the street did not mount so high. The room, silent, bare, opening upwards to the sky, was like a hole, a vault cut out of grey clay. Laurent furnished this vault after a fashion; he brought in two worn-out cane chairs, a table which had to lean against the wall for support, an old kitchen dresser, his box of colours and his old easel. The only luxury in the place was a large divan which he bought at a second-hand dealer's for thirty francs.

He remained a fortnight without even thinking of touching his brushes. He used to come at eight or nine in the morning, smoke, lounge on the couch, and wait till it struck twelve, happy in the thought that the day was still young,

with many long hours before its close. At twelve o'clock he went home to lunch, then hastened back to be alone, and no longer behold Thérèse's pale face. Then he digested, slept, lolled about until evening. His studio was a peaceful spot where he left off trembling. One day his wife proposed paying a visit to his dear sanctum. He refused, and as she came and knocked at the door in spite of his refusal, he did not open; he told her in the evening that he had spent the day studying at the Louvre. He feared Thérèse would bring Camille's spectre in her wake.

At last he became tired of this utter idleness. He bought some canvas and fresh colours, and set to work. Unable to afford living models, he resolved to paint according to his fancy, without troubling about nature. He commenced a man's head.

He now no longer shut himself up so much; he worked for two or three hours every morning, and spent his afternoons abroad, strolling about Paris and the suburbs. One day, when returning from one of these long walks, he met, opposite the Institute, his old college chum, who had obtained great success at the last Salon.

"What, you!" exclaimed the painter. "Ah, my poor Laurent, I should never have known you. How thin you have grown!"

"I'm married," replied Laurent, in an embarrassed tone.

"Married, you! Then I don't wonder at the change. What are you doing now?"

"I've hired a small studio; I paint a little in the morning."

Laurent gave him a hurried account of his marriage; then he feverishly described his future projects. His friend looked at him with an astonished expression which troubled and disquieted him. The truth was that the artist no longer recognised in Thérèse's husband the common, clumsy fellow

he had formerly known. Laurent seemed to him to have become refined ; his face was thinner and interestingly pale ; his whole figure seemed more dignified and supple.

"You are growing quite good-looking," the artist could not resist saying ; "you have the air of an ambassador. You are really stylish. At what school are you studying?"

This cross-examination was most irksome to Laurent. Nor did he like to leave his friend abruptly.

"Would you like to come up to my studio?" he at length asked his friend, who did not seem inclined to leave him.

"Very much," replied he.

The painter, unable to account for the great change he noticed, was anxious to visit his old comrade's studio. He had certainly no intention of mounting five stories merely to see Laurent's work, which he expected would be sure to disgust him ; he simply wished to gratify his curiosity.

After reaching the attic and glancing at the paintings on the walls, his astonishment redoubled. There were five studies, two women's heads and three men's, painted with decided power : the treatment was solid and effective, each detail was brought out with magnificent touches on a transparent grey ground. The artist hastened to examine them, and was so amazed that he did not try to hide his astonishment :

"Is this really your work?" asked he of Laurent.

"Yes," replied the latter. "They are sketches which will be useful to me in a large picture I am projecting."

"Come, no humbug ; did you really paint these studies?"

"Yes, I did. Why not?"

The painter did not like to reply : "Because they are the work of a true artist, and you were never more than a wretched dauber." He remained a long time silently examining the studies. They were decidedly crude, but they had a peculiarity, a character so powerful that they announced a

most highly developed artistic feeling. The painting was life-like. Laurent's friend had never seen outlines so full of great promise. When he had thoroughly examined them, he turned to Laurent :

“Frankly,” said he, “I did not think you capable of painting like this. Where the deuce did you get your talent? It is not a thing to be learnt.”

And he looked at Laurent, whose voice seemed to him gentler, whose every movement had a certain elegance. Little could he guess what terrible shock had changed this man, developing in him the nerves of a woman, delicate, and sensitive. There is no doubt that a strange revolution had taken place in the temperament of Camille's murderer. It is difficult for analysis to penetrate these depths. Laurent had possibly become an artist as he had become a coward, as a consequence of the subversion of his entire physical and moral system. Formerly, he was stifling under the heavy weight of his blood, he was blinded by the thick atmosphere of health which enveloped him ; now, fallen away, trembling, he had the restless spirit, the quick and sharp sensations of nervous natures. In the life of terror which he led, his mind went beyond itself and wandered into the rapture of genius ; the disorder, in a measure a moral one, the nervous affection which changed his whole being, developed in him an artistic feeling extraordinarily brilliant ; since he had killed Camille, his flesh was as though disburdened, his distracted brain seemed to have grown immense, and, in this sudden accession of mind, he had exquisite mental visions, a poet's reveries. And it was thus that his gestures had acquired a sudden polish, it was thus that his works were really laudable becoming in a moment original and life-like.

His friend tried no further to fathom the sudden birth of this artist. He went off in surprise. As he was leaving the

studio, he gave a parting glance at the studies and said to Laurent :

“I have only one fault to find, and that is that all your studies have a family likeness. These five heads resemble each other. Even the women have a kind of hard look which makes one think they are men in disguise. You see, if you are contemplating a large painting with these heads introduced, you must alter some of the faces ; your personages cannot all be brothers and sisters, that would be ridiculous.”

He left the studio, and, when on the landing, added with a laugh :

“I am very glad, old fellow, to have met you. I shall henceforth believe in miracles. Heavens ! what a swell you are !”

He went downstairs while Laurent re-entered the studio in great perturbation. When his friend had remarked that all these studies of heads had a family likeness, he had turned quickly aside to conceal his paleness. For this fatal resemblance had already struck him. He slowly returned to the paintings ; and as he gazed upon them, going from one to the other, a cold perspiration gathered on his back.

“He is right,” he murmured ; “they are all alike. They are like Camille.”

He drew back and sat down on the divan, without being able to keep his eyes off the studies of heads. The first was the face of an old man, with a long, white beard ; beneath this beard the artist could picture Camille’s receding chin. The second represented a fair young girl, and this young girl gazed at him with his victim’s blue eyes. The three other faces possessed each some feature of the drowned man. It was as if Camille had been disguised to represent an old man, a young girl, and every character in which the artist chose to skotch him, but retaining in each study the general lineaments of his face. There was another terrible point



ALL THE PORTRAITS PAINTED BY LAURENT RESEMBLE CAMILLE.

of resemblance between these heads; they appeared to be suffering and terrified, they seemed as though crushed beneath the same feeling of horror. Each had a slight wrinkle on the left corner of the mouth, which dragged the lips and distorted them. This wrinkle, which Laurent remembered seeing on the drowned man's convulsed features, gave them a mark of low parentage.

Laurent now saw that he had looked too long at Camille at the Morgue. The image of the corpse had been indelibly stamped on his memory. Now, his hand was involuntarily but continually tracing the features of that loathsome face the memory of which followed him everywhere.

Presently, the painter, who was now leaning back on the divan, imagined he saw the faces come to life. And he beheld five Camilles before him, five Camilles powerfully created by his own fingers, and who, by a horrible caprice, were of all ages and both sexes. He rose up, hacked the paintings to pieces, and threw them outside. He felt he would die of fright in his studio, if he peopled it himself with portraits of his victim.

An awful dread had seized him: he feared he had not the power to sketch any other head but that of the drowned man. He wished at once to ascertain if he was master of his own hand. He placed a clean canvas on the easel; then with a bit of charcoal he drew the rough outline of a face. It was Camille's. Laurent hastily rubbed the sketch out and tried another. For a whole hour he struggled against the fatality which guided his fingers. At each fresh trial he returned to the drowned man's head. In vain did he command his will, and resolve to avoid those well-known features; in spite of himself, he traced those lines, he obeyed his muscles and his rebellious nerves. At first he had sketched rapid outlines; he next made a point of guiding the charcoal slowly. The result was the same: Camille,

distorted with agony, invariably appeared upon the canvas.

The artist sketched successively heads the most varied, angels, virgins with aureolas, Roman warriors wearing their helmets, fair rosy children, old brigands covered with scars ; always, always, the face of the drowned man appeared, he was in turn angel, virgin, warrior, child and brigand. Then Laurent tried caricature, he exaggerated the features, drew monstrous profiles, invented grotesque heads, and only succeeded in making more horrible the striking portraits of his victim. He finished by designing animals, dogs and cats ; the dogs and cats vaguely recalled Camille.

A blind rage took possession of Laurent. He banged his fist through the canvas, thinking despairingly of his great picture. Now he must give up the thought for ever ; he felt that in future he could draw no face but Camille's, and, as his friend had remarked, faces that all resembled each other so closely would be ridiculous. He conjured up in imagination what his great work would have been ; he beheld on the shoulders of each of his personages, both men and women, the drowned man's wan and terrified features, the strange spectacle thus evoked exasperated him with its atrocious absurdity.

He would no longer therefore dare to paint, he would always be dreading to resuscitate his victim with the faintest touch of his brush. If he wished for peace in his studio he must never paint there. The thought that his fingers had the fatal faculty of constantly reproducing Camille's likeness caused him to look upon his hand with terror. It seemed to him that the hand was no longer his.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE attack which had been threatening Madame Raquin overtook her at last. The paralysis, which for months had been creeping along her limbs, ever on the point of enveloping her, suddenly grasped her at the throat and held her as in a vice. One evening, when she was quietly conversing with Thérèse and Laurent, she stopped in the middle of a sentence with her mouth open : she felt as though she were being strangled. When she tried to call out for help, she could only stammer hoarse sounds. Her tongue had become like stone. Her hands and feet had grown rigid. She found herself struck motionless and dumb.

Thérèse and Laurent jumped up, terrified at this thunderbolt, which, in less than five seconds, had doubled up the poor sufferer. When she was perfectly stiff, and gazed at them with beseeching eyes, they pressed her with questions to know the cause of her sufferings. She was unable to answer, she continued to look at them with profound anguish. Then they understood that they had nothing more than a corpse before them, a half living corpse, who saw what they did and heard what they said, but could not speak to them. They were in despair ; not that they really cared about the sufferings of the poor paralytic, they grieved for themselves, dreading the eternal tête-à-tête they would have to pass in the future.

From this day, the life of the couple became intolerable. They passed cruel evenings, in company with the infirm old woman who could no longer lull their fears to rest with her

gentle prattle. She lay in her easy-chair like a bundle, like a mere thing, and they sat alone at the opposite ends of the table, embarrassed and anxious. This living corpse no longer separated them; occasionally they forgot her, they confused her with the furniture. Then they were seized with their nocturnal fears, the dining-room became, like their bedroom, a terrible place wherein Camille's spectre rose before them. In this way they suffered four or five hours more each day. They trembled from the beginning of twilight, lowering the lamp-shade to prevent seeing each other, trying to believe Madame Raquin was about to speak and thus remind them of her presence. If they kept her there and did not get rid of her, it was because her eyes retained their life and it was sometimes a comfort to watch them move and shine.

They always placed the sufferer immediately under the lamp, so as to throw the light full upon her face and ever have it before them. This poor wan face would have been an unbearable sight to others, but they had such sore need of company that their eyes would rest upon it with real joy. It resembled the decomposed features of a dead person with two living eyes placed in their midst; these eyes alone moved, turning rapidly on every side; the cheeks and the mouth were as though petrified, they frightened one with their immutability. When Madame Raquin dropped off to sleep and lowered her eyelids, her pale and silent countenance was really like that of a corpse; Thérèse and Laurent, who then felt alone together, made a noise until the paralytic had opened her eyes and looked at them. They thus made her keep awake.

They looked upon her as a distraction which kept off their bad dreams. Now that she was infirm, she had to be tended like an infant. The nursing and attention they lavished on her, forced them to give another channel to

their thoughts. In the morning, Laurent helped her up, and carried her to her chair, and, in the evening, he carried her back to bed; she was still heavy, and he had to make use of all his strength to raise her tenderly in his arms and carry her. It was also he who wheeled her chair. The other cares devolved on Thérèse; she dressed the sufferer, fed her, sought to understand her slightest wish. Madame Raquin retained for some days the use of her hands, she could write on a slate and thus ask for what she wanted; then her hands became powerless, she could no longer lift them and hold a pencil; from that time she could only speak with her eyes, her niece had to guess her wants. The young woman devoted herself to the hard duties of sick-nursing; it gave an employment to her mind and body, which did her a great deal of good.

In order to avoid being alone by themselves, the couple wheeled the invalid's chair into the dining-room the very first thing in the morning. They placed her between them, as though she had been necessary to their existence; they made her assist at their meals, at all their interviews. They pretended not to understand when she expressed a desire to go to her own room. She was of no use except to make a third, she had no right to be alone. At eight o'clock Laurent would go off to his studio, while Thérèse went down to the shop, and the paralytic remained alone in the dining-room until noon; then, after lunch, she was again alone until six o'clock. Often during the day, her niece would go up, give a look round, and see if she wanted anything. The friends of the family could not sufficiently praise the virtues of Thérèse and Laurent.

The Thursday receptions continued as before, and the invalid was always present as formerly. Her chair was wheeled to the table; from eight o'clock to eleven she kept her eyes open, looking in turn at each guest with a pene-

trating gaze. At first, old Michaud and Grivet felt rather uncomfortable in the presence of the living corpse of their old friend ; they did not know how they ought to look, their sorrow was very limited, and they wondered how unhappy they were expected to be. Ought they to address conversation to this dead face, or take no notice of it whatever ? By degrees, they decided to treat Madame Raquin as if nothing had happened to her. They ended by seeming to completely ignore her condition. They chatted with her, asking questions and answering them, laughing for her and for themselves, never allowing themselves to be upset by the rigid expression of her face. It was a strange sight ; these men seemed conversing with a statue, as little girls talk to their dolls. The paralytic sat silent and motionless before them, and they talked and gesticulated, holding with her the most animated discourses. Michaud and Grivet were charmed with their good behaviour. They considered they were thus showing the greatest politeness, and they spared themselves, moreover, the nuisance of the customary condolences. Madame Raquin surely felt flattered at being treated like a person in good health, and henceforth, it was permissible to them to make merry in her presence without the least scruple.

Grivet had a mania. He affirmed that he understood Madame Raquin completely, that she could not look at him without his at once divining her wish. This was another delicate attention. Unfortunately Grivet was always mistaken. Very often, he interrupted the game of dominoes, looked closely at the paralytic whose eyes were quietly watching the play, and declared that she wanted such or such a thing. On investigation, it would be found she either wanted nothing at all, or something totally different. This did not discourage Grivet, who would shout triumphantly: "Just as I told you!" and begin again, a few

minutes later. It was a very different thing when the poor woman openly showed some want; Thérèse, Laurent, the guests named one after another the things she might require. Grivet then made himself conspicuous by his mistakes. He named everything he could think of at haphazard, always offering the very opposite to what Madame Raquin required. Yet, all the same, he would keep repeating :

“As for me, I can read her eyes like a book. There, she is now saying I am right. Are you not, my dear lady? Yes, yes.”

After all, it was no easy matter to guess the sufferer's wishes. Thérèse alone possessed that science. She communicated pretty easily with this walled-up mind, still living, though buried beneath a mass of dead flesh. What was passing in the brain of this miserable being, who was just sufficiently alive to exist without being able to take her part in the life around her? She saw, heard, and reasoned no doubt in a clear and distinct manner, and was debarred giving utterance, either by word or gesture, to the thoughts which arose in her. Perhaps her ideas were stifling her. She was powerless to raise her hand, or open her mouth, if even a movement, a word from her might have decided the destinies of the world. Her mind was like one of those miserable wretches who are sometimes by mistake buried alive, and who awake amid the darkness of the earth, two or three yards beneath the surface; they shriek, they struggle, and we pass over them without hearing their heartrending cries of despair. Laurent often looked at Madame Raquin as she sat, her lips closed, her hands resting on her knees, concentrating her whole being in her bright restless eyes, and he would say to himself :

“Who knows what are her solitary thoughts? Some terrible drama is possibly being enacted in the depths of that imprisoned mind.”

Laurent was wrong. Madame Raquin was happy, happy in the affection and the care of her dear children. She had always thought that she should fade away thus slowly, surrounded by devotion and caresses. True, she would have wished to retain the power of speech, to thank the friends who were helping her to die in peace. But she accepted her condition with resignation. The peaceful, retired life she had always led, the sweetness of her disposition, prevented her feeling too severely the sufferings of muteness and immobility. She had become once more a child; she passed her days without tedium, looking about her, thinking of the past. She even began to enjoy sitting quite still in her easy-chair, like a good little girl.

Day by day her eyes grew more gentle, more clear in their expression. She was able to use them like a hand or a mouth to ask or to thank. Thus she was enabled to supply, in a wonderful and touching manner, the organs which failed her. Her gaze was beautiful with a celestial beauty, in the midst of her poor face, the flesh of which hung flabby and distorted. Since her twisted and inert lips could no longer smile, she smiled with her eyes, with adorable tenderness; moist gleams and brightest rays were reflected from these orbits. Nothing could be more strange than these eyes laughing like lips in that dead face; the lower part of the countenance remained sad and wan, while the upper part became divinely illumined. It was especially for her dear children that she crowded all her gratitude, all her heart's affection, into a simple glance. When, night and morning, Laurent took her in his arms to carry her, she thanked him lovingly with looks full of tender effusion.

She lived thus for several weeks, awaiting death, feeling sheltered from all fresh misfortune. She thought she had had her share of suffering. She was mistaken. One evening a terrible blow overtook her.

Thérèse and Laurent had vainly placed her between them, full in the light. She was no longer sufficiently alive to separate them and defend them from their misery. When they forgot that she was there, hearing them and seeing them, their visions returned ; they saw Camille and tried to drive him away. Then words were dropped and avowals made in spite of them, bits of phrases which ended by revealing all to Madame Raquin. Laurent had a sort of wild paroxysm in which he spoke out like a madman. Suddenly the paralytic knew all.

A fearful contraction passed over her face, and she was so violently agitated that Thérèse thought she was about to leap up and shout aloud. Then she relapsed into the rigidity of iron. This sort of shock was the more appalling that it seemed to galvanize a corpse. Sensibility, momentarily recalled, vanished ; the invalid was left more prostrate, more ghastly pale. Her eyes, usually so soft, had become black and hard, like two bits of metal.

Never on any poor mortal had despair fallen with a more sudden blow. The frightful truth scorched the eyes of the paralytic like a flash of lightning, and penetrated her with the force of a thunderbolt. Had she been able to rise to utter the cry of horror which mounted to her throat to curse her son's murderers, she would have suffered less. But, after having heard everything, understood everything, she was forced to remain silent and motionless, confining within her the horror of her grief. She felt as if Thérèse and Laurent had tied her down, nailed her to her chair to prevent her springing up, and that they took a hideous pleasure in repeating to her : " We have murdered Camille," after having placed a gag over her mouth to stifle her moans. Terror, anguish seemed tearing up and down her frame, unable to have vent. She made superhuman efforts to raise the weight that was crushing her, to loosen the muscles

of her throat, and thus give outlet to the torrent of her despair. But powerless were her last efforts. She felt her tongue cold against her palate ; she could not escape her living death. The powerlessness of a corpse held her rigid. Her sensations resembled those of a man fallen into a trance, buried for dead, and who, fettered by the bonds of his flesh, hears the dull sound of the gravel being shovelled in overhead.

The ravishes accomplished in her heart were still more terrible. She felt an internal crumbling which wrecked her. Her whole life was left desolate ; all her tenderness, all her kind feelings, all her devotion, had been brutally uprooted and trodden under foot. She had led a life of affection and gentleness, and in her last hours, when she thought to carry to the grave her faith in the tranquil joys of existence, a voice cried out to her that all is false and all is wicked. The veil which had been rent showed her, beyond the love and friendship she had believed in, a fearful spectacle of blood and shame. She would have railed at God had she been able to utter a blasphemy. God had deceived her for over sixty years by treating her as a good and gentle little girl, by amusing her eyes with false pictures of tranquil joy. And she had remained child-like, thinking foolishly of a thousand silly things, unable to see real life dragged through the bloody mire of evil passions. God was wicked ; He should have told her the truth sooner, or have let her depart in her blind innocence. Now she had nothing left but to die, denying the existence of love, friendship, devotion. Nothing remained but murder and sensuality.

What ! Camille had been done to death by Thérèse and Laurent, and these two had conceived the crime in the midst of their shameful adultery ! There was for Madame Raquin, in this thought, such an abyss that she could not reason it out or seize hold of it in a clear and detailed

manner. She experienced one sensation only, that of a horrible fall; she felt as though she were dropping into a black, chilly hole. And she said to herself: "I shall be smashed to pieces at the bottom."

After the first shock, the monstrosity of the crime seemed to her to make it impossible. Then she feared she should lose her reason, when she was convinced of the adultery and the murder, by the remembrance of trifling circumstances which before had puzzled her. Thérèse and Laurent were without doubt Camille's murderers—Thérèse whom she had brought up, Laurent whom she had loved as a tender, devoted mother. This great fact turned round and round in her head like a gigantic wheel with a deafening noise. She imagined such loathsome details, she fathomed such deep hypocrisy, she saw in her mind's eye a double game of such atrocious irony, that she would gladly have died to put an end to her faculty of thinking. One single idea, mechanical and implacable, ground her brain with the weight and tenacity of a mill-stone. She kept repeating to herself: "It is my children who have murdered my child," and this was all she could find to express her despair.

In the sudden revulsion of all her feelings, she lost herself and could not recognise herself any more; she remained overwhelmed by the brutal invasion of thoughts of vengeance which swamped her natural kindness of heart. After this transformation, all was dark in her; she felt, growing in her dying frame, a new being, cruel and implacable, who longed to bite the murderers of her son.

When she had succumbed to the relentless grasp of paralysis, when she had realized that she could not fly at the throats of Thérèse and Laurent, whom she longed to strangle, she resigned herself to silence and immobility, and big tears fell slowly from her eyes. Nothing could be more heart-breaking than that mute and motionless despair. Those

tears which fell one by one on that dead face of which not a muscle moved, that pale inert face which could only show its grief by weeping from its eyes, presented a touching spectacle.

Thérèse was seized with a terrified pity.

“You must carry her to bed,” said she to Laurent, pointing to her aunt.

Laurent hastened to wheel her into her room. Then he stooped down to lift her in his arms. At this juncture, Madame Raquin hoped some hidden power would enable her to spring to her feet; she made a supreme effort. God would not surely permit Laurent to hold her to his breast; she trusted a thunderbolt would fall on him if he attempted anything so monstrous. But her effort availed nothing, and Heaven reserved its thunder. She remained powerless, passive, as a bundle of linen. She was seized, taken up, carried by the assassin; she had the agony of feeling herself inert and abandoned in the arms of Camille's murderer. Her head rolled on to Laurent's shoulder, and she fixed on him her eyes dilated with horror.

“There, there, look at me as much as you like,” murmured he, “your eyes can't devour me.”

And he flung her brutally on the bed. The infirm old woman fainted away. Her last thought had been one of terror and disgust. In future she must, morning and evening, submit to the foul embrace of Laurent's arms.

CHAPTER XXVII.

NOTHING less than a sudden and irresistible paroxysm of fear had caused the guilty pair to speak, to make avowals in the presence of Madame Raquin. They were neither one nor the other naturally cruel; humanity would have prompted them to avoid such a revelation, even if their own safety had not already enjoined them to keep silence.

On the ensuing Thursday they were singularly uneasy. In the morning, Thérèse asked Laurent if he thought it safe to have the paralytic in the dining-room during the evening. She knew all, and might give the alarm.

“Bosh!” replied Laurent, “she can’t stir so much as her little finger. How can she do mischief?”

“She will perhaps find some means,” answered Thérèse. “Since that evening, I can read an implacable resolve in her eyes.”

“Oh! no, the doctor told me all was indeed over for her. If she ever speaks again, it will be in the rattle of her last agony. She cannot last much longer. We should be fools to burden our consciences with anything more, by preventing her assisting at our gathering.”

Thérèse shuddered.

“You misunderstood me,” she cried. “Oh! you are right, enough blood has been shed. I meant we could shut my aunt in her room and pretend she is asleep, or not so well.”

“Just so,” replied Laurent, “and that fool Michaud would

walk into the room all the same to see his old friend. It would be an excellent way to ruin us."

He stammered, he wished to seem at his ease, but fear made him falter.

"We had better let things take their course," he continued. "Those people are as stupid as geese; they will not be able to understand the old woman's mute despair. They cannot suspect anything, for they have not the most remote idea of the truth. The experiment once made, we shall be easy for the future, despite our imprudence. You will see, it will be all right."

That evening, when the guests arrived, Madame Raquin occupied her usual place between the stove and the table. Laurent and Thérèse made a show of being in high spirits, hiding their fears, watching with dread for the incident which was sure to occur. They had lowered the lamp shade to the utmost; the American cloth alone was illuminated.

The guests began with the trivial, noisy conversation which was the invariable prelude to the first game of dominoes. Grivet and Michaud occupied themselves, as usual, in polite inquiries after the health of the invalid, inquiries to which they themselves furnished the most satisfactory replies, as they were in the habit of doing. After that, without another thought to the poor old woman, the company threw themselves, heart and soul, into the game.

Since she had learnt the horrible secret, Madame Raquin had been awaiting this evening with feverish longing. She had collected her last remnant of strength to denounce the culprits. Up to the last moment, she had feared she would not be present; she thought Laurent would hide her, kill her perhaps, or, at least, shut her up in her room. When she found she was going to be left there with the guests, she rejoiced in thinking she would make an effort to avenge her son. Knowing the power of utterance was gone, she

tried a new language. By a supreme force of will; she succeeded in galvanizing, so to say, her dead right hand, and in raising it slightly from her knee, where it was always stretched inert; then she made it climb slowly up one of the legs of the table before her, and managed to get it on to the American cloth. Then she feebly moved the fingers to attract attention.

When the players beheld in their midst this dead hand, so white and powerless, they were much surprised. Grivet stopped, with his arm raised, at the moment of triumphantly placing the double six. Ever since the seizure, the paralytic had been unable to move her hands.

“Look! Thérèse,” cried Michaud, “Madame Raquin is positively moving her fingers! No doubt, she wants something.”

Thérèse was unable to reply; she and Laurent had both watched these unwonted movements of the paralytic, she saw her aunt's hand, dead-white under the glare of the lamp, like an avenging hand about to speak. The two murderers waited, breathless.

“By Jove! yes,” said Grivet, “she wants something. Oh! she and I understand each other well. She wants to play dominoes. That's it, isn't it, my dear lady?”

Madame Raquin made a violent sign in the negative. With immense effort, she stretched out one finger, bent the others back, and began painfully to trace letters on the table. She had scarcely made a few marks, when Grivet again called out in triumph:

“I see: she says I'm right in placing the double six.”

The paralytic cast an angry look at the old clerk, and resumed the word she wished to write. But at every moment Grivet interrupted her, saying it was useless, that he had understood, and he suggested some fresh nonsense. At last, Michaud insisted on his keeping quiet.

“Why the devil can't you let Madame Raquin speak?” said he. “Speak, my old friend.”

And he watched the American cloth as though he had been listening. But the paralytic's fingers were growing weary, they had begun a word at least ten times, and they now wavered from right to left in trying to finish it. Michaud and Olivier leant forward, unable to decipher it and encouraging the sufferer to try again.

“Good!” cried Olivier suddenly. “I can make it out this time. She has written your name, Thérèse. Look: ‘Thérèse and—’ Go on, my dear lady.”

Thérèse nearly screamed with anguish. She watched her aunt's fingers moving over the cloth, and it seemed to her that these fingers were tracing her name and her crime in letters of fire. Laurent had risen hastily, debating whether he should make a rush at the old woman and break her arm. He thought all was lost, he felt the chill and the weight of his punishment, as he beheld that hand return to life to reveal Camille's murder.

Madame Raquin still wrote on, but more and more feebly.

“It's quite clear, I can read that plainly,” resumed Olivier, after a pause, looking at the pair. “Your aunt has written both your names: ‘Thérèse and Laurent—’”

The old lady made several signs of affirmation, while casting crushing glances at the murderers. Then she tried to finish, but her fingers had stiffened. The supreme force of will which had galvanized them, was escaping from her; she felt the paralysis slowly return along her arm, and again seize hold of her wrist. She hurried on, and managed to trace another word.

Old Michaud read aloud:

“Thérèse and Laurent have—”

And Olivier asked:

“What is it they have done, your dear children?”

The murderers, seized with maddening fear, were on the point of completing the sentence aloud. They were gazing with fixed and troubled eyes at the avenging hand, when, all at once, that hand was convulsed and stretched flat on the table; then it slipped and fell on the knee of the paralytic like a mass of inanimate flesh. The malady had returned and arrested the punishment. Michaud and Olivier sat down again disappointed, while Thérèse and Laurent tasted a joy so sudden, that they nearly fainted under the reaction.

Grivet was vexed at having his word doubted. He thought the moment had arrived for retrieving his fame by completing Madame Raquin's unfinished sentence. As everyone was seeking its meaning :

"It's plain enough," said he, "I can read the rest of it in madame's eyes. I don't need her writing on a table; one of her looks suffices for me. She meant to say: 'Thérèse and Laurent have taken good care of me.'"

Grivet was delighted with his idea, for the whole company agreed with him. The guests began praising the couple who were so devoted to the poor invalid.

"It's evident," said old Michaud, gravely, "that Madame Raquin wished to do homage to the tender attentions bestowed on her by her children. That is an honour for the family."

And he added, as he returned to his dominoes :

"Come, let's continue. Where were we? Grivet was just going to place the double six, I think."

Grivet placed the double six. The game went on, stupid and monotonous.

The paralytic was looking at her hand, plunged in deep despair. Her hand had just played her false. She felt it now as heavy as lead; never again would she be able to raise it. Heaven did not will that Camille should be avenged, his mother was deprived of the sole means of making known

to mankind the murder of which he had been the victim. And the unhappy creature told herself there was nothing left for her to do but to go and join her child in the grave. She closed her eyelids, feeling useles henceforth, and wishing to think herself already in the darkness of the tomb.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FOR two months, Thérèse and Laurent had struggled with the miseries of their union. Each caused the other to suffer. By slow degrees, hatred grew up between them, they ended by casting angry glances at each other, full of vague menace.

It was but natural that hatred should come. They had loved like brutes, with a hot passion, all of the blood ; then, amid the enervating effects of the crime, their love had turned to fear, and their caresses had filled them with a sort of physical fright ; now, beneath the suffering which marriage and a common existence forced upon them, they became disgusted and enraged.

Their hatred was an atrocious one and broke into terrible outbursts. They felt that they bored each other ; they told themselves they would lead peaceful lives if they were not for ever face to face. When together, an enormous weight seemed stifling them, and they would have liked to remove this weight, to destroy it ; their lips were compressed, thoughts of violence gleamed in their clear eyes, and they longed to destroy each other.

In reality the same thought was gnawing at their vitals : they were furious at the contemplation of their crime, they were desperate at having for ever blasted their lives. This was the true source of their anger and their hatred. They felt the evil to be incurable, that they must suffer till the day of their death for the murder of Camille, and this idea of the perpetuity of their suffering exasperated them. Not

knowing who to blame, they mutually blamed themselves, they execrated one another.

They would not acknowledge that their marriage was the fatal punishment for the murder ; they refused to hear the inner voice which cried out the truth, and spread before them the history of their life. And yet, in the fits of rage which agitated them, they could both clearly read the secret of their anger, they could divine the fury of their selfish lust, which had urged them to commit murder to satisfy their criminal desires, and then found in the result of the murder a disconsolate and intolerable existence. They remembered the past, they knew that their disappointed hope of licentious pleasure and peaceful happiness had alone filled them with remorse ; if they could have lived joyfully and loved on in peace, they would not have mourned Camille, they would have fattened on their crime. But their bodies had revolted, refusing marriage, and they asked themselves in terror whither their fear and disgust would lead them. They could only foresee a frightful future of suffering, an awful and violent consummation. Then, like two enemies who have been tied together and are making futile efforts to release themselves from this enforced embrace, they strained every nerve and muscle, they girded themselves up, without being able to set themselves free. Then, realizing that they must ever remain within each other's grasp, irritated by the cords which were cutting into their flesh, loathing each other's touch, feeling their uneasiness hourly increase, forgetting their union was their own work, and unable to bear their bonds for another instant, they hurled the most horrible reproaches at each other, they tried to suffer less, to stanch the wounds they were inflicting, by abusing one another, by deafening each other with their cries and accusations.

Every evening witnessed a fresh quarrel. The murderers seemed to seek occasions for aggravating each other, and

relaxing their strained nerves. They watched each other, read each other with a glance, probing the wounds, finding the sore spots, and taking a fiendish delight in making each other howl in agony. They thus lived amid continual irritation, tired of each other, unable any longer to bear a word, a look, a gesture without suffering and going crazy. Their whole beings were ready for violence; the least impatience, the most ordinary disappointment became strangely exaggerated in their disordered minds, and grew suddenly into acts of gross brutality. A mere nothing raised a storm which lasted till the following day. Too hot a dish, an open window, a contradiction, a simple remark sufficed to drive them raving mad. And ever, in the heat of the dispute, they flung the drowned man at each other's heads. From one word to another they got to reproach each other with the murder at Saint-Ouen; then they were beside themselves with rage, they could no longer control their passion. Then followed terrible scenes, stifled cries, blows, horrible shrieks, shameful brutality. It was generally after dinner that Thérèse and Laurent quarrelled thus; they shut themselves up in the dining-room that others might not hear the noise of their despair. There, they could fight it out, in that damp room, that sort of vault which the lamp illumined with yellowish rays. In the silence and tranquillity of the air their voices rang out with harrowing distinctness. They did not cease until they were exhausted with fatigue; then only could they hope for a few hours of rest. Their quarrels became a sort of necessity to them, a means of gaining sleep by stupefying their nerves.

Madame Raquin listened to them. She was always present, in her easy-chair, her hands stretched on her knees, her head erect, her face motionless. She heard all, and her dead flesh remained without a shudder. Her eyes fastened themselves on the murderers with a penetrating gaze. Her mar-

tyrdom must have been atrocious. She thus learnt by degrees every detail of the events which had preceded and followed Camille's murder, she was gradually made aware of all the lewdness and crimes of those she had called her dear children.

The quarrels of the guilty pair made known to her the smallest circumstances, and unveiled to her terrified mind, one by one, the episodes of the horrible tragedy. And as she penetrated deeper into this bloody mire, she cried mercy, she thought to have reached the depths of infamy, and she had to go lower still. Every evening she learnt some fresh detail. The frightful history was ever growing before her; it seemed to her she was lost in a never-ending dream of horror. The first avowal had been brutal and crushing, but she suffered still more from these repeated blows, from these little facts which the couple let escape them in their fury and which threw a sinister light on the crime. Once a day this mother heard the account of her son's murder, and each day this account became more ghastly, more vivid, and was dinned into her ears with more force and cruelty.

Sometimes, Thérèse was seized with remorse in the presence of that wan face, down which silently coursed great tears. She would draw Laurent's attention to her aunt, imploring him with a look to be silent.

"Oh, nonsense!" he would brutally cry, "you know very well she can't denounce us. Am I any happier than she is? We have her money, so there's no need for me to put myself out."

And the quarrel would continue, fierce, piercing, killing Camille afresh. Neither Thérèse nor Laurent dared yield to the feeling of pity which sometimes came to them to shut the paralytic up in her room, when they were quarrelling, and thus to save her the account of the crime. They feared they might murder each other, if they had no longer even

this living corpse between them. Their pity succumbed to their cowardice, they inflicted untold suffering on Madame Raquin, because they needed her presence as a safeguard for themselves against their hallucinations.

All their quarrels were alike and led them to the same accusations. From the moment that Camille's name was uttered and that one accused the other of killing him, the battle began in earnest.

One evening, at dinner, Laurent, who was seeking for a pretext to give vent to his ill-temper, found the drinking water in the water-bottle luke-warm ; he declared that tepid water made him sick, and that he must have some cold.

"I was unable to get any ice," replied Thérèse curtly.

"All right, I sha'n't drink," retorted Laurent.

"The water is quite right."

"It's warm and tastes muddy. It's just like river water."

Thérèse repeated :

"River water."

And she burst into a fit of sobbing. An association of ideas had just taken place in her mind.

"What are you crying for ?" asked Laurent, who foresaw the answer and turned pale.

"I'm crying," sobbed the young woman, "because—you know well enough—oh ! my God ! my God ! It was you who killed him."

"You lie !" cried the murderer vehemently, "confess that you lie. If I threw him into the Seine it was because you drove me to commit the murder."

"I ! I !"

"Yes, you ! Don't deny it, don't oblige me to force the truth out of you. I mean to make you confess your crime, and own your share in the murder. That will soothe and ease me."

"But it wasn't I who drowned Camille."

“Yes, a thousand times yes, it was you! Oh! you feign surprise and forgetfulness. Wait, I’ll bring it back to your recollection.”

He rose up from the table, bent over towards the young woman, and, crimson with rage, shouted in her face :

“You were at the water’s edge, you remember, and I said to you in a whisper : ‘I’m going to chuck him into the water. Then you agreed to it, you got into the boat. You see very well that you murdered him with me.’”

“It’s false. I was beside myself, I don’t remember what I did, but I never wished to kill him. You alone committed the crime.”

These denials tortured Laurent. As he told her, it was a comfort to him to feel he had an accomplice ; he would have endeavoured to prove to himself, had he dared, that all the horror of the murder lay at Thérèse’s door. He had longings to beat the young woman to make her confess she was the guiltier of the two.

He began pacing the room, shouting, gesticulating, followed by Madame Raquin’s fixed gaze.

“Oh! the wretch! the wretch!” stammered he in a choking voice, “she wants to drive me mad. Didn’t you come one night to my room, like a common prostitute? didn’t you intoxicate me with your caresses to get me to remove your husband from your path? He disgusted you, he smelt like a sick child, you told me so when I used to come and visit you here. Had I such thoughts three years ago? Was I such a scoundrel? I was leading the quiet life of an honest man, doing harm to no one. I wouldn’t have hurt a fly.”

“It was you who killed Camille,” repeated Thérèse, with a desperate obstinacy which maddened Laurent.

“No, it was you, I tell you it was you,” replied he furiously. “You had better not exasperate me, it might end badly. Do you mean to say, you wretched woman, that you don’t

remember anything? You gave yourself up to me like a common woman, there, in your husband's room; you taught me a voluptuousness which drove me mad. Confess that you had calculated all this, that you hated Camille, and that you had for a long while wanted to get rid of him. You doubtless took me as your lover in order to make me your tool to kill him."

"It isn't true. Your accusation is monstrous. You have no right to taunt me with my weakness. I can say, as you do, that before I met you I was a respectable woman who had never done any one an injury. If I led you astray, you led me farther astray. We had better drop arguing, do you hear, Laurent? I might have rather too many things to reproach you with."

"What can you have to reproach me with?"

"Oh, nothing. You didn't save me from myself, you took advantage of my weakness, you exulted in ruining my life. I forgive it all. But, for mercy's sake, don't accuse me of killing Camille. Keep your own crime to yourself; don't try to terrify me beyond endurance."

Laurent raised his hand to strike Thérèse in the face.

"Beat me, I prefer that," she added, "the suffering would be less."

And she held her face to him. He restrained himself, fetched a chair, and sat down beside the young woman.

"Listen to me," he said, trying to speak calmly, "it's cowardly to deny your share in the crime. You're perfectly well aware that we committed it together, you know you're as guilty as I am. Why will you double my burthen by maintaining your innocence? Were you innocent, you would never have consented to marry me. Remember the two years which followed the murder. Would you like a proof? I will go and confess all to the public prosecutor, and you will see if we shall not both be condemned."

They shuddered, and Thérèse replied:

"The public might, perhaps, condemn me, but Camille

knows that you did it all. He does not haunt me at night as he does you."

"Camille leaves me in peace," said Laurent, pale and trembling, "it's you who see him in your nightmares; I've heard your screams."

"Don't say that," cried the young woman angrily, "I didn't scream, I don't want the ghost to come. Oh, I understand, you want to turn him away from you. I'm innocent, I'm innocent!"

They gazed at each other terror-stricken, exhausted, fearing they should see the corpse of the drowned man. Their quarrels always ended thus; they protested their innocence, they sought, by self-deception, to banish bad dreams. Their continual efforts were directed to mutually denying the responsibility of the crime, to defending themselves as if before a tribunal. each hurling at the other the most terrible accusations, Strange to say they never succeeded in becoming dupes of their own oaths, both having a clear recollection of all the circumstances of the murder. They read the confession in each other's eyes, though their lips denied it. Puerile lies, ridiculous assertions, a wordy dispute of two wretched beings who lied for lying's sake, without the power of ignoring their untruth. They played, in turn, the part of accuser, and, though the trial they acted never had any result, they recommenced it each evening with cruel tenacity. They knew they could prove nothing, that they could not change the past, yet they persisted in the attempt, they returned ever to the charge, goaded by pain and terror, vanquished beforehand by the overwhelming reality. The sole result of their disputes was a tempest of words and shouts, the noise of which deafened them for a moment.

As long as their passion raged in stormy accusations, the stricken woman fixed upon them her steady gaze. Her eyes shone with an ardent joy, whenever Laurent raised his great hand over Thérèse's head.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FRESH phase declared itself. Thérèse, driven to extremity by her fears, seeking vainly some thought to console her, began mourning the drowned man aloud in Laurent's presence.

A sudden despondency took possession of her. Her nerves, too tightly strung, collapsed, her hard and violent nature softened. She had already felt some emotion in the early days of her marriage. This emotion returned, as a necessary but fatal reaction. When the young woman had struggled with her whole nervous energy against Camille's spectre, when she had lived several months in a state of secret irritation, indignant at her sufferings, seeking to cure them by the sole effort of her will, she suddenly experienced such physical lassitude that she faltered and was vanquished. Then, once more a weak woman, even a young girl, without the strength to be firm, to stand up feverishly confronting her fears, she gave herself up to compassion, to tears and regrets, hoping to find in them some consolation. She tried to make capital of the weakness of the mind and of the flesh which beset her. Perhaps the drowned man, who had not yielded to her anger, might yield to her tears. She therefore calculated her remorse, telling herself it was doubtless the best means to soothe and appease Camille. Like certain devotees, who think to deceive God and to obtain pardon from Him by praying with the lips only, and putting on the humble attitude of penitence, Thérèse humbled herself, beat her breast, sought words of repent-

ance, without having in her heart aught save fear and cowardice. Besides, she experienced a certain physical pleasure in abandoning herself, in feeling herself weak and shattered, in offering herself up unresistingly to her grief.

She overwhelmed Madame Raquin with her tearful despair. The paralytic became of daily use to her. She served Thérèse as a sort of fall-stool, a piece of furniture before which she could fearlessly confess her sins and ask for pardon. As soon as she felt the need for tears, for finding a resource in weeping, she threw herself on her knees before the invalid, and there cried and choked, enacting a scene of remorse which relieved while it weakened her.

"I am a wretched woman," she faltered; "I deserve no forgiveness. I deceived you; I sent your son to his death. Never can you forgive me. And yet, if you could read in my heart the remorse which is rending it, if you knew how much I suffer, perhaps you would take pity on me. But no, there is no pity for me. I would gladly die thus at your feet, crushed by shame and sorrow."

She would talk on in this strain for hours together, passing from despair to hope, first condemning, then pardoning herself. She affected the tones of a little sick girl, now curt, now plaintive. She threw herself flat on the ground, and then stood up, obeying every impulse of pride and humility, of repentance and revolt, which passed through her frame. Sometimes she even forgot she was kneeling before Madame Raquin, and she continued her monologue in a dream. When she had quite bewildered herself with her own words, she would rise up tottering, stupefied, and go down into the shop, calmed, and no longer fearing a nervous outburst of sobbing before her customers. When a fresh fit of remorse attacked her, she would run up again to her aunt, and again throw herself on her knees at her feet. And this scene began afresh ten times a day.

Thérèse never thought what indescribable agony her tears and noisy repentance must have been to her aunt. In truth, if a new punishment had been sought to torture Madame Raquin, no more frightful one could certainly have been found than the comedy of remorse played by her niece. The stricken woman divined the selfishness concealed beneath these outbursts of grief. She suffered horribly from these long monologues to which she was forced to listen every moment, and which were a constant reminder of her son's murder. She could not forgive, she wrapped herself up in implacable thoughts of vengeance, rendered more acute by her impotence, and, all day long, she was condemned to listen to prayers for pardon, cowardly, humble petitions. She longed to reply; some of her niece's words filled her throat with crushing refusals, but she had to remain silent, letting Thérèse plead her cause, without ever interrupting her. Her inability to cry out or to close her ears filled her with indescribable torment. And, one by one, the young wife's words fell upon her ear, slow and plaintive, like an irritating song. She thought at first that the murderers inflicted this kind of punishment upon her from a motive of diabolical cruelty. Her only means of defence was to close her eyes, so soon as her niece knelt before her; if she must hear her, she need not see her.

Thérèse became at length emboldened to embrace her aunt. One day, in a fit of contrition, she pretended to have seen a look of mercy in the paralytic's eyes. She dragged herself along on her knees, crying in distracted tones: "You forgive me! You forgive me!" then she kissed the brow and cheeks of the poor old woman, who was unable to move her head away. The cold flesh on which Thérèse placed her lips caused her violent disgust. She thought this disgust would be, like the tears and remorse, an excellent specific for calming her nerves; she continued

to kiss the invalid daily by way of penance and for the sake of relief.

“Oh, how good you are?” she sometimes cried. “I see my tears have moved you. Your looks are full of pity. I am saved!”

And she overwhelmed her with caresses, put her head on her knees, kissed her hands, smiled at her in a happy kind of way, tended her with marks of passionate affection. After a little while, she came to believe in the reality of this comedy, she fancied she had obtained Madame Raquin’s pardon, and thenceforth she unceasingly talked to her of the happiness she felt at having her forgiveness.

This was too much for the paralytic. She nearly died of it. When enduring her niece’s kisses, she felt the same sharp repugnance and anger which filled her morning and evening when Laurent took her in his arms to or from her bedroom. She was condemned to submit to the loathsome caresses of the abandoned woman who had betrayed and murdered her son; she could not even wipe off the kisses which this woman left upon her cheeks. For many weary hours she could feel these kisses burning her. She had thus become the puppet of Camille’s destroyers, a puppet whom they dressed, turned this way and that, and made use of according to their needs and caprices. She remained inert in their hands, as if she had been filled with bran, and yet she was a living being, disgusted and heartbroken at the mere touch of Thérèse or Laurent. What exasperated her most of all was the atrocious mockery of the young woman, who pretended to read thoughts of pardon in her glances when those glances would have gladly dealt death to the criminal. She often made supreme efforts to utter a cry of protest; she concentrated all her hatred in her eyes. But Thérèse, whose purpose it answered to repeat twenty times a day that she was forgiven, redoubled her caresses,

and refused to understand. The paralytic had to accept thanks and effusive observations from which her heart revolted. From that time she became filled with a bitter and powerless irritation against her cringing niece, who sought for adorable endearments to reward her for what she called her heavenly goodness.

When Laurent was there, and his wife knelt before Madame Raquin, he would raise her up roughly :

“No acting,” he would say. “Do I go on my knees and shed tears? You do all that to upset me.”

Thérèse’s remorse worried him strangely. His suffering had augmented since his accomplice had taken to dragging herself about him, her eyes red with weeping, her lips moving beseechingly. The sight of this living grief redoubled his fears and increased his uneasiness. It was like an eternal reproach stalking about the house. And he began to fear that repentance would one day prompt his wife to reveal everything. He would have preferred that she had remained stiff and menacing, defending herself rancorously against his accusations. But she had changed her tactics; she now voluntarily avowed her share in the crime; she accused herself; she became gentle and timid, and turned to imploring redemption with zealous humility. This attitude irritated Laurent. Their quarrels grew more ominous and alarming every evening.

“Listen,” Thérèse would say to her husband; “we are great sinners; we must repent, if we wish to enjoy any peace. See me, since my repentance I have found more peace. Do as I have done. Let us say together that we are justly punished for having committed a horrible crime.”

“Bosh!” Laurent would gruffly reply. “Say what you like. I know you’re devilish clever and hypocritical. Weep away, if it amuses you. But have the goodness not to annoy me with your tears.”

“ Ah ! you are indeed wicked. You refuse to show the least remorse. You’re a coward, though, for you stole upon Camille unawares.”

“ Do you mean to say I alone am guilty ? ”

“ No, I don’t say that. I’m guilty, more guilty than you are. I should have defended my husband against you. Oh ! I see all the horror of my sin ; but I am trying to obtain forgiveness for it, and I shall succeed, Laurent, while you, you will continue to lead a miserable life. You haven’t even the decency to hide your loathsome anger from my poor aunt ; nor have you ever said one penitent word to her.”

And she would embrace Madame Raquin, who closed her eyes. She hovered about her, raising the pillow that supported her head, lavishing on her a thousand little attentions. Laurent grew exasperated.

“ Why don’t you leave her alone ? ” he would cry. “ Can’t you see that you and your attentions are odious to her ? If she could raise her hand, she would strike you.”

His wife’s measured, melancholy tones, her resigned attitudes, made him gradually fly into a blind rage. He saw plainly enough what her tactics were. She no longer intended making common cause with him ; she meant to stand apart, enveloped in her repentance, in order to escape the dead man’s embrace. Now and then it flashed across him that she had perhaps taken the right path, that her tears would cure her of her terrors, and he shuddered at the prospect of being alone in his suffering, alone in his dismay. He would have liked to have repented also, to have played at least the comedy of remorse, as an experiment ; but the necessary tears and the appropriate words would not come to him. He then returned to his violent conduct, shaking Thérèse to irritate her and drive her back into his own furious ways. The young woman made a point of remaining

inert, of replying to his angry cries with tearful submission, of growing more and more humble and repentant in proportion to his roughness. Laurent, in consequence, became quite beside himself. To bring his passion to a climax Thérèse would always wind up with a panegyric of Camille, and a display of all his virtues.

“He was good,” she would say, “and we must have been cruel indeed to attack that kind heart which had never nourished an evil thought.”

“He was good,” jeered Laurent. “Oh! yes, I know; you mean he was a fool, don’t you? Have you forgotten? You often told me his least word irritated you, that he could never open his mouth without uttering some stupid remark.”

“You need not sneer. It needed but this, that you should insult the memory of the man you murdered. You little know the heart of woman, Laurent; Camille loved me and I loved him.”

“You loved him. Well! really, that is good. It was doubtless because you loved your husband that you took me for your lover. I recollect one day when you were resting on my breast, that you said Camille disgusted you, for when your fingers touched him, they seemed to sink into clay. Oh! I know why you loved me. You wanted stronger arms to encircle you than that poor devil’s.”

“I loved him like a sister. He was my benefactress’s son, he had all the delicacy of weak natures, he was noble and generous, obliging and loving. And we killed him, oh heavens! oh heavens!”

She wept, she was overcome with emotion. Madame Raquin, indignant at hearing praises of her son from such polluted lips, cast bitter glances upon her. Laurent, powerless against this torrent of tears, paced up and down, meditating some effective means of stifling Thérèse’s remorse. All the good which he heard told of his victim ended by

causing him a poignant anxiety ; he was sometimes touched by his wife's heart-rending accents, he began to believe in the reality of Camille's virtues, and his fears redoubled. But what stung him to the quick, and made him proceed to violence, was the contrast the drowned man's widow drew between her first and second husbands, always in favour of the first.

"Ah ! yes," she would say, "he was better than you ; I only wish he were still alive, and you in his place, buried in the earth."

At first, Laurent would shrug his shoulders.

"Say what you will," continued she, excitedly, "perhaps I did not love him when he was alive, but now I remember what he was, and I love him. I love him, and I hate you ; do you understand ? As for you, you are a murderer."

"Will you hold your tongue !" roared Laurent.

"And he is an innocent victim, a worthy man, killed by a scoundrel. Oh ! you don't alarm me. You know well enough you're a wretch, a brute, without heart or soul. How can I possibly love you, covered, as you are, with Camille's blood ? Camille was tenderness itself for me, and I could kill you, do you hear ? if that could bring Camille to life again, and give me back his love."

"Will you hold your tongue, you wretch ?"

"Why should I hold my tongue ? I speak the truth. I should be buying forgiveness at the price of your blood. Ah ! how I suffer and weep ! It's my fault that this monster has murdered my husband. I must go some night and kiss the earth over his grave. That shall be my last embrace."

Laurent, intoxicated, driven to fury by the awful pictures Thérèse spread out before his eyes, rushed at her, knocked her down, and held her beneath his knee, his fist raised.

"That's it," she cried, "strike me, kill me. Camille

never raised his hand against me; but you, you're a monster."

And Laurent, maddened by her words, shook her in his rage, beat her, bruised her flesh with the blows of his clinched fist. Twice he nearly strangled her. Thérèse yielded to the blows; she keenly enjoyed being knocked about; she offered herself, abandoned herself, provoked her husband to beat her more and more. This was another remedy to neutralise her life's suffering; she slept better at night when she had been well thrashed in the evening. Madame Raquin tasted an exquisite delight when Laurent thus dragged her niece about the floor, bruising her body with kicks.

The murderer's existence became unbearable ever since the day when the infernal notion entered Thérèse's head to repent, and to mourn aloud for Camille. From that moment the wretched man lived constantly with his victim; every hour he had to hear his wife praising and regretting her first husband. The most trivial circumstance became a pretext: Camille did this, Camille did that, Camille had such a quality, Camille loved in such a manner. Always Camille, always melancholy reflections bemoaning Camille's death. Thérèse employed all her spiteful powers in enhancing this torture which she inflicted on Laurent in self-defence. She went into the minutest details, she related the hundred and one trifles of his childhood with regretful sighs, and thus mingled recollections of the victim with every act of daily life. The spectre which was already haunting the house was now introduced openly. He sat on the chairs, took his place at the table, lay on the bed, made use of the furniture and of the various things lying about. Laurent could not touch a fork, a brush, no matter what, without being reminded by Thérèse that Camille had touched it before him. Incessantly knocking up against the man he had killed, the

murderer at last experienced a singular sensation, which nearly took away his senses ; he imagined, from being constantly compared with Camille, and from using all the household belongings which Camille had used, that he was Camille, that he had become identified with his victim. His brain reeled, and then he rushed on his wife to silence her, to stop the utterance of words which drove him to the verge of delirium. All their quarrels ended in blows.

CHAPTER XXX.

THERE came a day when Madame Raquin thought to escape the sufferings she was enduring by starving herself to death. She had reached the end of her courage, she could no longer bear the martyrdom imposed upon her by the constant presence of the murderers ; she hoped to find a supreme solace in death. Her anguish became keener day by day, as Thérèse kissed her, and Laurent took her in his arms and carried her like a child. She resolved to escape these caresses which filled her with a horrible disgust. As she had not sufficient life left in her to avenge her son, she preferred being quite dead and leaving in the hands of these wretches nothing but a corpse, which would feel nothing, and with which they could do what they liked.

For two days she refused all nourishment, using her remaining strength in closing her teeth, spitting out what they succeeded in placing in her mouth. Thérèse was in despair ; she wondered where she could cry and repent when her aunt should be gone. She held interminable monologues with her to prove that it was her duty to live ; she wept, she even grew angry, showing her former evil temper, and opening the paralytic's jaws like one opens those of an animal which seeks to resist. Madame Raquin held her own. It was an odious struggle.

Laurent remained neutral and indifferent. He was surprised at Thérèse's anxiety to prevent the suicide. Now that the presence of the old woman was useless to them, he longed for her death. He would not have killed her, but

as she wished to die, he did not see the necessity of balking her determination.

“Leave her alone!” he would cry to his wife. “It’ll be a good riddance. Perhaps we shall be happier when she’s gone.”

This advice, often repeated before her, produced a strange sensation in Madame Raquin. She feared that Laurent’s hope might be realized, that after her death the household would taste some calm and happy hours. She told herself she was cowardly to die, and wrong to go before witnessing the end of the fulsome adventure. Not till then should she join Camille in the tomb and tell him: “You are avenged.” The prospect of suicide became distasteful to her when she thought of leaving this world in ignorance of the end; there, in the cold and silence of the grave, she would slumber, eternally tormented by uncertainty as to the ultimate punishment of his executioners. She felt that to sleep the calm sleep of death, she must doze off in the poignant joy of vengeance, carrying with her a dream of satisfied hate, a dream which should last through eternity. So she took the nourishment which her niece offered, she consented to live on.

Besides, she plainly saw matters were hastening to a climax. Each day the position of the pair was becoming more strained, more intolerable. A fatal crisis which would end all was imminent. Every hour Thérèse and Laurent threatened each other with increasing defiance. It was no longer in the night alone that they suffered from being together; their entire days were now passed in painful anxiety, in heartrending attacks. Everything became a cause of terror and suffering. They lived in a hell, bruising each other, embittering every word and every action, seeking to push each other into the gulf they felt yawning beneath their feet, and both stumbling in the attempt.



J. P. W. ENG. C.

THERÈSE VIOLENTLY ADMINISTERING FOOD TO MADAME RAQUIN.

The thought of a mutual separation had come to both of them. They had each dreamt of flying, of getting some repose, far from this Passage du Pont-Neuf, where the dirt and damp seemed part of their desolate life. But they could not, they durst not escape. To cease torturing each other, to cease suffering mutually seemed to them impossible. They possessed the obstinacy of cruelty and hatred. A sort of repulsion and attraction parted them and kept them together at the same time; they experienced the peculiar sensation of two people, who after a quarrel wish to separate, and who yet invariably return to abuse each other afresh. And then there were material obstacles to their flight, the poor paralytic to be nursed, and the Thursday evening guests to be satisfied. If they disappeared, suspicion might be aroused; then they fancied themselves pursued and guillotined. And they remained through cowardice, they remained and lived miserably on amid the horror of their existence.

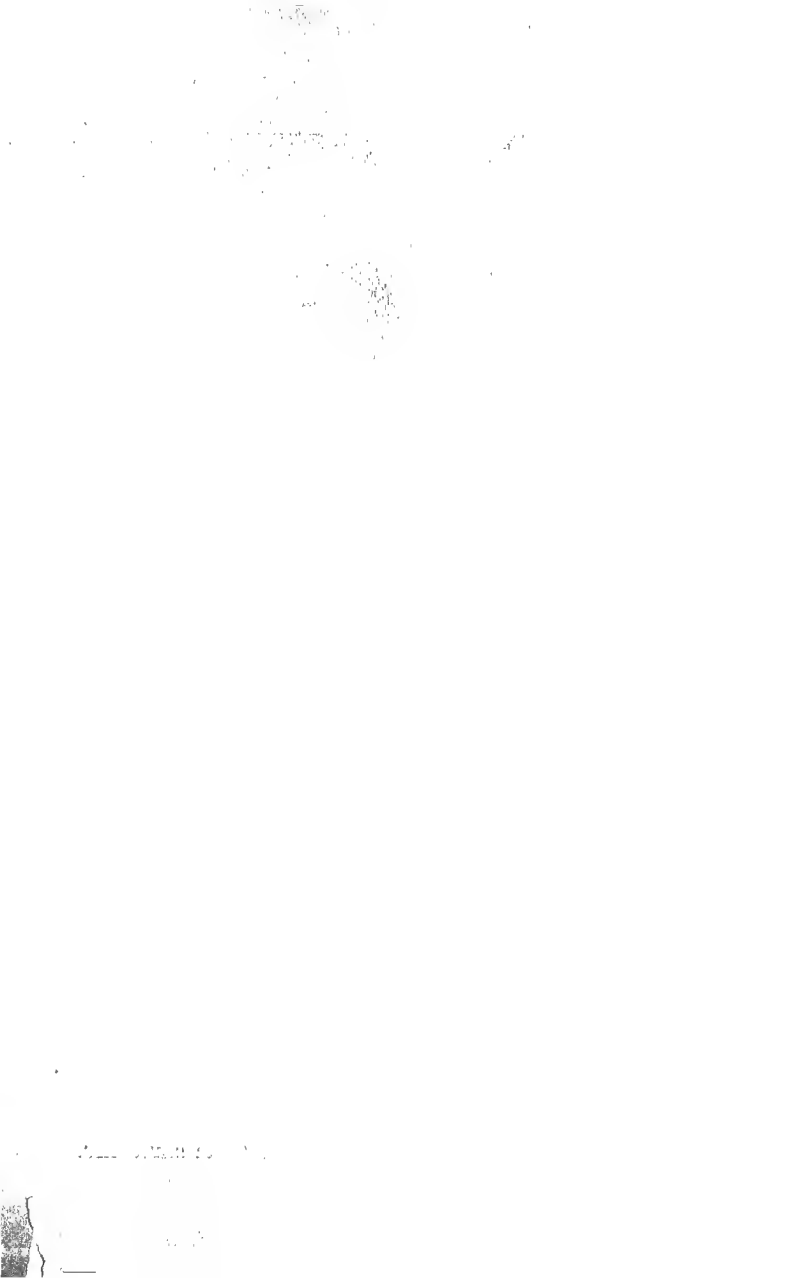
When Laurent was away in the morning and afternoon, Thérèse would wander from the dining-room to the shop, restless and troubled, not knowing how to fill the void which she felt daily increasing in her being. She was idle when neither weeping at Madame Raquin's feet, nor writhing beneath her husband's insults and blows. As soon as she found herself alone in the shop, a torpor overpowered her, she gazed vacantly at the people who passed along the dark and dirty Passage, she grew sad unto death in the depths of this black hole, stinking like a grave-yard. She ended by inviting Suzanne to come and pass long days with her, hoping that that poor creature's calm and gentle presence would sooth her.

Suzanne joyfully accepted the invitation; she had always loved her with a sort of respectful affection; she had often longed to come to sit and work with her while Olivier was

at his office. She brought her embroidery, and took Madame Raquin's empty place behind the counter.

From that time, Thérèse began to neglect her aunt a little. She went less frequently to weep at her knees and to kiss her lifeless face. She had a fresh occupation. She tried to interest herself in Suzanne's quiet chatter concerning her household and all the trifles of her monotonous life. This drew her thoughts from herself. She sometimes found herself amused with the nonsense, and this caused her to smile bitterly when alone.

She gradually lost all the customers from the shop. Since her aunt had been laid up in her arm-chair, she entirely neglected the goods, leaving them to rot in dust and damp. A mouldy smell pervaded the air, cobwebs hung from the ceiling, and the floor was never swept. But what really banished the customers was the strange reception they sometimes met with from Thérèse. When she was upstairs, ill-treated by Laurent or prostrated with terror, and the shop bell sounded imperiously, she had to come down, almost without taking time to wipe away her tears and smooth her hair; she then served the waiting customer most carelessly, sometimes even avoiding the trouble of doing so at all, by calling from the top of the stairs that she was out of the article required. These disobliging ways were not calculated to retain custom. The humble work-women of the neighbourhood, used to Madame Raquin's gentle manners, fled before her niece's rude ways and wild appearance. When Thérèse had Suzanne as a companion the defection was complete: the two young women unwilling to be interrupted in their gossip, showed plainly that they wished to get rid of the few remaining purchasers. After this, the haberdashery business did not contribute a sou to the household expenses; and it therefore became necessary to draw on the capital of forty and odd thousand francs.





LAURENT PROVOKED BY THÉRÈSE KICKS HER SAVAGELY.

Occasionally Thérèse absented herself for the whole afternoon. No one knew where she went. She had doubtless fostered this intimacy with Suzanne, not only for the sake of her company, but also to leave her to take charge of the shop when she was away. When, in the evening, she returned, exhausted, with dark circles round her eyes, she found Olivier's little wife behind the counter, smiling vaguely, in the same position in which she had left her five hours earlier.

About five months after her marriage, Thérèse had a fright. She found herself to be in the family way. Without being able to explain her feeling to herself, the idea of having a child by Laurent, seemed to her monstrous. She feared vaguely she might be delivered of a drowned child. She seemed already to feel within her the icy touch of a soft putrid corpse. At all costs, she resolved to get rid of this burden which froze her life, and which she could no longer endure. She said nothing to her husband, and, one day, after cruelly provoking him, she stood doggedly before him to receive a kick from his uplifted foot. She allowed herself to be kicked thus, sufficient to have killed her. The next day she had a miscarriage.

Laurent, for his part, led a frightful existence. The days seemed to him insupportably long ; each one filled with the same anguish, the same heavy worries, which overwhelmed him at stated hours with a crushing regularity and monotony. His life dragged on, terrified each night with the memory of the past day, and the anticipation of the morrow. He knew that, in future, all his days would be alike, that all would bring him similar suffering. And he saw before him a vista of weeks, months, years, which awaited him, dark and implacable, following each other, closing in round him, and stifling him little by little. When the future is hopeless, the present becomes painfully bitter. Laurent no longer revolted, he was advancing, and abandon-

ing himself to the stagnation which was already enveloping his whole being. Idleness was killing him. In the morning he went out, not knowing where to go, disgusted at the thought of doing what he had done the previous day, and forced against his will to do the same again. He went mechanically, and through habit, to his studio. This room with its grey walls, from which one could only see a square patch of sky, filled him with a gloomy sadness. He flung himself on his divan, his arms hanging down, his mind stultified. Moreover, he no longer dared to use his brushes. He had made fresh attempts, and each time Camille's face mocked him from the canvas. To save himself from going mad, he ended by throwing his box of colours in a corner, and imposing upon himself absolute idleness. This enforced idleness fell upon him with incredible weight.

In the afternoon, he anxiously pondered what he should do. He loitered half-an-hour on the pavement in the Rue Mazarine, consulting himself, meditating how he could pass the time. He rejected the idea of returning to his studio, he always decided to go down the Rue Guénégaud, then to walk along the quays. And he went on until evening, stupefied, shivering suddenly whenever he looked at the Seine. In his studio or in the streets, his dejection was the same. The next day, the same thing began again, he spent the morning on the divan, and he dragged himself along the quays in the afternoon. This lasted for months, and it might go on for years.

Sometimes Laurent remembered that he had murdered Camille in order to be idle ever after, and he was astonished, now that he was doing nothing, to endure such misery. He wanted to force himself to be happy. He assured himself he was wrong to be miserable, that he had just attained supreme felicity, which consists in folding one's arms, and that he was a fool not to taste this felicity

in peace. But his arguments fell before facts. He was forced to confess at heart, that idleness increased his torments, by giving him every hour of his life in which to think of his despair, and to measure its incurable bitterness. Utter indolence, that brute existence for which he had longed, was his punishment. Sometimes he ardently wished for an occupation which would deliver him from his thoughts. Then he gave himself up, he sank beneath the weight of the blind fate which bound his limbs the more effectually to crush him.

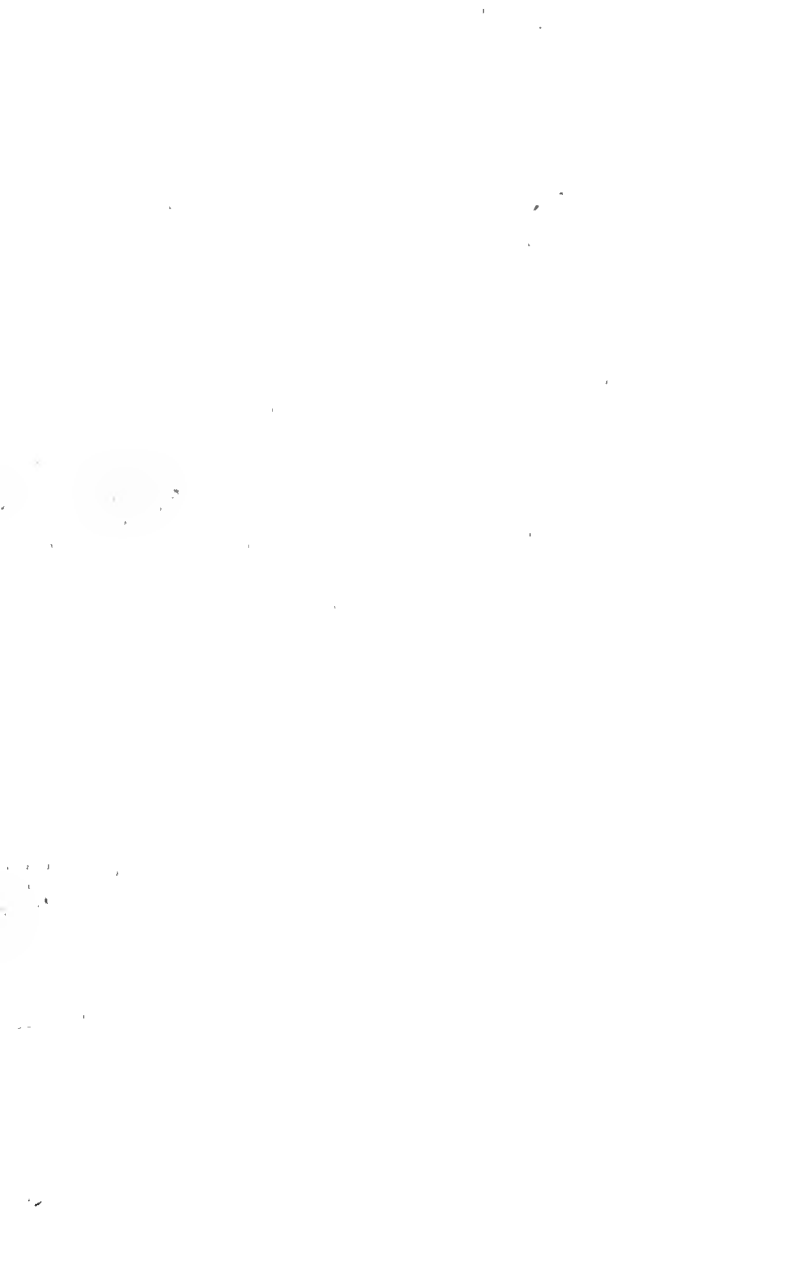
In all truth, he only felt relief when beating Thérèse of an evening. This released him from his torpid grief.

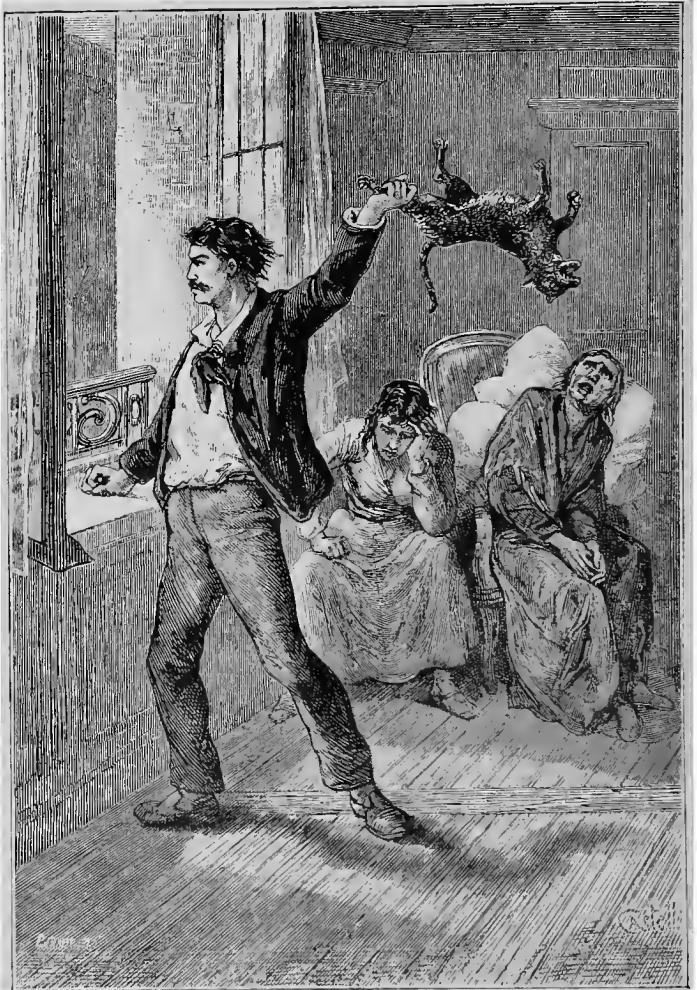
His most acute suffering, both moral and physical, came from Camille's bite on his neck. Sometimes he imagined the wound to be covering his whole frame. If he managed for a few moments to forget the past, a sharp prick he fancied he felt, recalled the murder to his mind and body. He could not stand before a mirror, without seeing the phenomenon which he had so often noticed, and which always terrified him: under the influence of his emotion, the blood rushed to his neck, and deeply coloured the scar, which began smarting and throbbing. This sort of living wound, waking up, blushing, biting him at the least emotion, alarmed and tortured him. He finished by believing the drowned man's teeth had inserted there some animal which was devouring him. The portion of neck bearing the scar no longer seemed to belong to his body; it seemed a strange bit of flesh which had been fastened there, like some poisoned meat which was rotting his muscles. He thus for ever carried about with him the living, devouring memory of his crime. Thérèse, whenever he was beating her, sought to scratch him at that place; she sometimes dug her nails into the spot and made him howl with pain. Ordinarily, she pretended to weep so soon as she saw the

bite, in order to make it more intolerable to Laurent. All the revenge she took for his brutality, was to torture him by means of this bite.

He had often been tempted, when shaving, to cut his neck, and thus obliterate the marks of the drowned man's teeth. Standing before the looking-glass, when he raised his chin and perceived the red scar under the white lather of soap, he grew furious, and snatched up the razor to hack at the flesh. But the touch of the cold blade against his skin always recalled him to himself; he turned faint, he was forced to sit down, and to wait until his quieted cowardice permitted him to finish shaving.

In the evening, he only emerged from his torpor to burst into blind and puerile anger. When tired of quarrelling with Thérèse and beating her, he vented his fury like a child by kicking the walls, he sought something to smash. That consoled him. He nursed an special hatred for the tabby cat, François, who, the moment he appeared, took refuge on the paralytic's knees. If Laurent had not yet killed him, it was because he was literally afraid to seize hold of him. The cat glared at him with great round eyes, of fiendish fixity. It was these eyes, always turned on him, which exasperated the young man; he asked himself what was written in those eyes which never left him; he ended by having regular frights, imagining the most absurd things. When sitting at table, at no matter what moment, in a long interval of silence, or in the heat of an argument, if he turned round suddenly and found François examining him with a heavy, implacable gaze, he turned pale, grew restless, and was nearly shouting to the cat: "Speak out, and tell me what you want with me." He seized, with frightened joy, every opportunity of squeezing François's tail or one of his paws, and then the poor animal's mewling filled him with vague terror, as though he had heard the cry of pain of a





LAURENT RIDDING HIMSELF OF THE CAT FRANÇOIS.

human being. Laurent was literally afraid of François. Especially since the latter had taken to living on the stricken woman's knees, as in the heart of an impregnable fortress, from which he could, with impunity, rivet his green eyes on his enemy. Camille's murderer traced a vast resemblance between this angry beast and the paralytic. He felt sure the cat, as well as Madame Raquin, was aware of the crime, and would denounce it, if ever he gained the power of speech.

At last, one evening, François glared so stolidly at Laurent, that the latter, irritated beyond measure, resolved to put an end to it. He opened wide the dining-room window, and caught up the cat by the skin of the neck. Madame Raquin understood ; two large tears rolled down her cheeks. The cat began to swear, to struggle, trying to turn and bite Laurent's hand. But the latter stuck to him ; he swung him round two or three times, and then flung him with the full force of his arm against the great, black wall opposite. François was crushed nearly flat, his back broken, and he fell on the glass roof of the Passage. All the night through were heard the dying moans of the miserable beast, as he tried to drag himself along the gutter, with his broken spine. Madame Raquin mourned that night for François almost as much as she had wept for Camille ; Thérèse had a violent fit of hysterics. The cat's cries of pain were frightful in the darkness, under the windows.

Laurent had ere long a fresh source of anxiety. He was alarmed at certain changes in his wife's demeanour.

Thérèse became gloomy, taciturn. She no longer overwhelmed Madame Raquin with avowals of repentance, with kisses of gratitude. She resumed towards the paralytic her cold cruel manner, her selfish indifference. It seemed as though she had tried remorse, and not finding in it the consolation she sought, she had turned to another remedy.

Her sadness was doubtless the result of her vain search for peace. She now contemplated the impotent woman with a sort of disdain, as a useless thing which could no longer even serve as a consolation. She grudgingly provided her with the bare necessaries which would keep her from starving. From this moment she became silent and dejected, as she slowly crawled about the house. She was constantly absent from home, sometimes four and five times a week.

These changes surprised and alarmed Laurent. He supposed that remorse, taking a fresh shape with Thérèse, was now causing this gloomy weariness which he noticed in her. This worry disquieted him much more than the demonstrative despair with which she overwhelmed him in earlier days. She now said nothing, she no longer quarrelled with him, she seemed entirely self-contained. He would have preferred her giving vent to her misery sooner than see her thus wrapt up in herself. He feared that some day the anguish would stifle her, and that to obtain relief she would be forced to go and tell all to a priest or a magistrate.

Thérèse's numerous fittings then obtained an alarming signification in his eyes. He fancied she was seeking a confidant away from home, and was preparing to betray him. Twice he sought to follow her, but lost her in the streets. He set himself to watch her again. A fixed idea possessed him: Thérèse, unable longer to bear her mental misery, was about to reveal everything, and he must be in time to gag her, and force the confession down her throat.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ONE morning, Laurent, instead of going to his studio, took up a position in a wine-shop, which formed one of the corners of the Rue Guénégaud, facing the Passage. There he examined all the people who emerged on to the pavement of the Rue Mazarine. He was watching for Thérèse. The previous day, the young woman had expressed her intention of going out early and probably not returning home before evening.

Laurent waited a good half hour. He knew his wife always went by way of the Rue Mazarine; for a moment, however, he feared she had escaped him by taking the Rue de Seine. He had an idea of going back to the Passage and hiding in the alley of the house itself. As he was growing impatient, he saw Thérèse walk quickly out of the Passage. She was arrayed in bright colours, and, for the first time, he noticed she was dressed like a fast woman, with a long train; she traipsed along the pavement, alluringly looking at the men, holding her skirt up in front with her hand, high enough to display all the front of her legs, her laced boots and her white stockings. She went up the Rue Mazarine. Laurent followed her.

The weather was warm, the young woman walked slowly, her head raised, her hair hanging down her back. The men who had stared her in the face turned round to look after her. She turned down the Rue de l'École-de-Médecine. Laurent was terrified; he knew there was a police-station somewhere in the vicinity; he told himself that he could no

longer doubt that his wife was going to give him up to justice. He made up his mind to spring upon her, if she crossed the threshold of the police office, to entreat her or beat her and force her to silence. At a street corner, she looked at a constable who was passing, and he trembled for fear she should speak to him; he hid in a doorway, seized with a sudden fear of immediate arrest, if he showed himself. This walk was a real agony for him; while his wife was showing herself off in the sunshine, her skirts sweeping the pavement, careless and bold, he was following behind her, pale and trembling, feeling all was over, that he could never escape, and that he would be guillotined. Every fresh step she took seemed to him a step nearer to his doom. Fear gave him a sort of blind conviction, the young woman's slightest movement added to his certainty. He followed her, he went where she went, as one goes to punishment.

Suddenly, on turning into the old Place Saint-Michael, Thérèse went towards a café which was then at the corner of the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince. She sat down among a group of women and students, at one of the tables out on the pavement. She shook hands familiarly with all these people. Then she ordered a glass of absinthe.

She seemed quite at her ease. She chatted with a fair young man, who had evidently been waiting for her there some time. Two girls came leaning over the table where she was seated, and addressed her familiarly with their hoarse voices. Women were smoking cigarettes close to her, men were kissing the women openly, before the passers-by, who did not take the least notice. Coarse jests, rude laughter were heard by Laurent, who had remained motionless on the opposite side of the Place under a gateway.

When Thérèse had finished her absinthe, she rose up, took the fair young man's arm, and went down the Rue de la Harpe. Laurent followed them as far as the Rue



THÉRÈSE'S LOOSE BEHAVIOUR AT THE CAFÉ IN THE PLACE
SAINT-MICHEL.

Saint-André-des-Arts. There he saw them enter a furnished lodging-house. He stood in the middle of the road, looking up at the front of the house. His wife appeared for a moment at an open window on the second floor. Then he fancied he could see the fair young man's arms creeping round Thérèse's waist. The window closed with a bang.

Laurent understood. Without waiting longer, he quietly turned back, reassured, happy.

"Bah!" he said to himself, walking towards the quays, "that's better. She has an occupation now, she is not meditating mischief. She's a devilish sight sharper than I am."

What surprised him was that the idea of seeking consolation in vice had not first come to himself. He might have found in it a cure for his fears. It had not occurred to him because his flesh was numbed, and he no longer felt the slightest desire for debauchery. His wife's infidelity left him perfectly calm. He felt no revolt of blood or nerves at the thought that she was in the arms of another. On the contrary, it amused him; he felt as if he had been following some friend's wife, and he laughed at the trick this wife was playing her husband. Thérèse had become alienated from him to such a point that he no longer felt her living in his breast, and he would have sold and delivered her a hundred times for one hour's peace of mind.

He strolled along, revelling in the sudden and happy reaction which had changed his terror into peace. He could have thanked his wife for seeking a lover, when he thought her in quest of a commissary of police. This adventure had an unexpected issue which gave him a pleasant surprise. The clearest thing he saw in all this was that he had been wrong to tremble, and that he ought also to try if vice would do him any good by drowning his gloomy thoughts.

The same evening, Laurent, on his way back to the shop, decided that he would demand a few thousand francs from his wife, and use the necessary pressure to get them. He thought how much vice costs a man, he vaguely envied girls who can sell themselves. He waited patiently for Thérèse, who had not yet come in. When she arrived he dissembled, saying not a word of the morning's discovery. She was not quite sober. From her disarranged garments came that mixed odour of stale tobacco and liquor which pervades smoking-rooms. Tired out, her face streaked with livid blotches, she staggered, drowsy from the shameful fatigue of the day.

The dinner was a silent one. Thérèse could not eat. At dessert, Laurent planted his elbows on the table, and deliberately asked her for five thousand francs.

"No," she answered, curtly. "If I let you have your way, you would bring us to penury. Don't you know our position? We're going straight to ruin."

"That may be," replied he, coolly, "I don't care, I must have some money."

"No, a thousand times no! You gave up your appointment, the shop is bringing in nothing, and we can't live on the interest of my dowry. Every day I have to encroach upon the capital to maintain you, and give you the hundred francs a month you forced from me. You sha'n't have a sou more—do you hear? It's no use."

"Think it over, don't refuse like that. I tell you I want five thousand francs, and I mean to have them. You will give me them all the same."

This cool obstinacy irritated Thérèse, and completed her intoxication.

"Ah, I know!" she cried. "You wish to end as you began. It's four years now that we've maintained you. You only came among us for what you could get, to eat and

drink ; and, ever since, you have been living upon us. You're a gentleman who does nothing—a gentleman who's arranged so as to live at my expense, with his arms folded. No, you shall have nothing, not a sou. Shall I tell you ? Well, then, you're a —”

And she said the word. Laurent burst out laughing, and shrugged his shoulders. He merely replied :

“You learn elegant words in the company you now frequent.”

This was the only allusion he made to Thérèse's amours. She raised her head sharply, and said in a sour tone of voice :

“At any rate, I don't frequent the society of murderers.”

Laurent turned very pale. He kept silent for a moment, his eyes fixed on his wife ; then, in a trembling voice :

“Listen to me, my girl,” he resumed, “don't let us quarrel ; it will do neither of us any good. I'm at the end of my courage. It will be as well for us to understand each other, if we would avoid worse consequences. I've asked you for five thousand francs because I want them. I may even tell you that I intend to employ them in ensuring our peace.”

He smiled strangely, and went on :

“Come, think it over, give me your last word.”

“I've already thought it over,” answered the young woman. “I've given you my last word, you sha'n't have a sou.”

Her husband jumped up savagely. She feared he was going to beat her ; she shrank into herself, resolved not to yield beneath the blows. But Laurent did not even approach her, he contented himself with coldly announcing that he was tired of life, and that he was going to confess the murder to the nearest commissary of police.

“You drive me to extremities,” he said, “you make my life

unbearable. I prefer to end it. We shall be tried and condemned together. That's all."

"Do you think you alarm me?" cried his wife. "I'm as tired of life as you are. If you don't go to the commissary of police I will. Oh! yes, I'm ready to follow you to the scaffold, I'm not a coward like you. Come along with me to the commissary's."

She had risen, and was already on her way to the staircase.

"All right," faltered Laurent, "let's go together."

When they had reached the shop, they looked at one another, anxious and alarmed. They felt as though they had just been nailed to the spot. The few seconds that had elapsed while they came downstairs had sufficed to show them, in a flash of reason, the consequences of a confession. They saw rapidly and clearly, and all together, the police, the prison, the assize court, and the guillotine. And, in the innermost recesses of their beings, they felt misgivings, they were tempted to fall on their knees, and entreat each other to stop, to reveal nothing. Fear and embarrassment held them two or three minutes, silent and motionless. Thérèse was the first to pluck up courage, to speak and to yield.

"After all," she said, "I'm very stupid to refuse you this money. You're sure to spend it for me, sooner or later. I may as well let you have it at once."

She did not seek to disguise her defeat. She sat down at the counter, and wrote out a cheque for five thousand francs, which Laurent could cash at a bank. No further mention was made of the commissary that evening.

As soon as Laurent had the gold in his pocket, he took to drink and women, and led a noisy dissipated life. He stayed out till morning, slept all day, went about at night, tried to excite himself, and to escape reality. But he only succeeded in sinking lower still. When revelry was loud

around him, he heard the terrible silence within ; when a mistress kissed him, when emptying his glass, he only found at the end of his debauchery, a heavy weight of sadness. He was no longer adapted for a lewd and gluttonous life ; his frozen frame, rigid so to say internally, grew weary of kisses and intoxication. Surfeited beforehand, he could not succeed in heating his imagination, or exciting his senses or his appetites. He suffered a little more from making the effort, and that was the only result. Then when he returned home and saw Madame Raquin and Thérèse, his fatigue made him the prey of frightful fits of terror ; he would then take an oath to stay at home, and endure his suffering in order to get used to it and subdue it.

Thérèse now went less and less from home. For a month she lived, like Laurent, on the streets, in the cafés. She would come in for a few minutes, towards evening, attend to Madame Raquin's wants, put her to bed, and sally forth again until the following morning. On one occasion she and her husband were four days without seeing each other. Then followed a deep disgust ; she felt that vice was not more successful than the comedy of remorse. She had in vain visited all the low haunts in the Quartier Latin, she had in vain led a noisy, dissolute life. Her nerve was gone ; debauchery, animal pleasures no longer affected her sufficiently to chase away memory. She was like one of those drunkards, whose scorched palate remains numbed beneath the fire of the most burning stimulants. She was inert in her lewdness ; when in company of her lovers she only felt bored and weary. So she gave them up, telling herself they were useless to her. Then followed a despairing idleness which kept her in the house, unwashed, unkempt, ill dressed. She neglected her person in every way.

When the two murderers found themselves thus face to face, wearied out, having exhausted every means of trying

to escape from each other, they understood that they had no more power of resistance. Dissipation would have no more to do with them, and had sent them back to their sufferings. They were once more in the dark, damp house in the Passage, they were as though immured there for evermore, for they had often tried to be free, but never had they succeeded in loosing the bonds of blood which bound them. They no longer thought of attempting the impossible task. They were conscious of being so driven, crushed, riveted together by fate that all further struggle would be ridiculous. They resumed their existence in common, but their hatred developed into fury.

The evening quarrels recommenced. Moreover, the shouts and blows went on all day. To hatred was now added mistrust, and the mistrust finished driving them mad.

They feared each other. The scene caused by the demand for five thousand francs was soon repeated morning and evening. Their fixed idea was that each would give the other up to justice. They could think of nothing else. When one of them said a word, or made a movement, the other had visions of a visit to the commissary of police. Then they fought or implored each other. In their anger they shouted they were going to reveal everything, they nearly drove one another mad with fright; then they trembled, they humbled themselves, they promised, with bitter tears, to keep silence. They suffered horribly, but they lacked the courage to heal the wound by searing it with a red-hot iron. If they held this threat of confession over each other's head, it was simply as a mutual weapon of self-defence, for they never would have had strength to speak the word which would have purchased peace with punishment.

More than twenty times they went to the very door of the police-station, one behind the other. First it was

Laurent who would confess the murder, then it was Thérèse who ran to give herself up. And they always joined each other in the street, deciding to wait a little longer, after exchanging recriminations and ardent entreaties.

Every fresh outburst left them more fierce and more suspicious.

They watched each other from morning to night. Laurent was for ever in the house in the Passage, and Thérèse never let him out of her sight. Their suspicions, their dread of mutual treachery, brought them more together, united them in an atrocious intimacy. Never since their marriage had they lived so closely attached to each other, and never had they endured such torture. Notwithstanding the agony they caused themselves, they never lost sight one of the other; they preferred to endure the most poignant sufferings rather than be separated for an hour. If Thérèse went down into the shop, Laurent followed, for fear of her chatting to a customer; if Laurent stood at the door, looking at the people passing along the Passage, Thérèse came and stood by him, to see that he spoke to no one. On the Thursday evenings, when their guests were assembled, the murderers gazed supplicatingly at each other; each listened to the other with terror, fearing some sudden avowal, giving a dangerously compromising meaning to half-spoken sentences.

Such a hostile attitude could not be longer maintained. Thérèse and Laurent simultaneously arrived at the determination to escape the consequences of their first crime by committing a second. It was indispensable that one disappeared for the other to taste a moment's repose. This thought came at the same time to each; both felt the pressing necessity of a separation, both wished the separation to be eternal. The murder they contemplated seemed to them natural, fated, forcibly resulting from Camille's

murder. They did not even discuss it, they accepted the project as the only means of safety. Laurent resolved to kill Thérèse, because Thérèse was in his way, because she could betray him with a word; and because she caused him unbearable torments; Thérèse resolved to kill Laurent for the same reasons.

The resolve to murder once fixed calmed them a little. They made their arrangements. It is true they acted feverishly, without much prudence; they thought very vaguely of the probable consequences of a murder committed without ensuring flight and impunity. They felt an invincible necessity for killing each other, they obeyed this necessity like wild beasts. They would not have given themselves up for their first crime, which they had concealed so cleverly, yet they risked the guillotine in committing a second, which they did not even seek to hide. They did not even see this inconsistency in their conduct. They simply settled that if they succeeded in escaping, they would go and live abroad, after carrying off all the money. Thérèse had, some fifteen or twenty days previously, withdrawn the few thousand francs remaining of her dowry, and kept the cash in a drawer, which Laurent knew of. They did not for an instant trouble their heads as to what would become of Madame Raquin.

Laurent had met, some few weeks before, one of his old college mates, who was then studying with a celebrated chemist who took a great interest in toxicology. This comrade had taken him to the laboratory where he worked, showing him the utensils, naming the drugs. One evening, when he had decided on the murder, Laurent, as he saw Thérèse drinking a glass of sugar and water, remembered having noticed in the laboratory a little stone phial, containing prussic acid. Calling to mind what his friend had told him of the terrible effects of this poison, which destroys life

and leaves little trace, he thought it was just the sort of poison he wanted. The following day he succeeded in escaping; he paid a visit to his friend, and while his back was turned, he stole the little stone phial.

The same day Thérèse took advantage of Laurent's absence to have ground a large cook's knife which had been used for cutting loaf sugar, and which was all blunt. She hid the knife in a corner of the sideboard.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE following Thursday, the Raquins' party, as the guests always called it, was more than usually gay. It lasted until half-past eleven. Grivet, on leaving, said he had never passed a more agreeable evening.

Suzanne, who was in the family way, talked incessantly to Thérèse of her pains and her hopes. Thérèse seemed to listen with great interest; her eyes fixed, her lips tightly closed, she bent her head from time to time; her lowered lashes seemed to cast a shadow over her face. Laurent, on his side, paid a sustained attention to the twaddle of old Michaud Olivier. These gentlemen never ceased, and Grivet could scarce get a word in edgeways between the father and son. Besides, he felt a certain respect for them; he admired their conversation. On this particular evening, chatting having superseded the usual game, he called out naively that the police magistrate's stories amused him nearly as much as a game of dominoes.

For the four years that the Michauds and Grivet had spent their Thursday evenings at the Raquins', they had not once tired of these monotonous gatherings which returned with a wearisome regularity. Never had they once suspected the drama which was enacting in this house, so gentle and peaceful when they entered it. Olivier usually remarked with a judicial pleasantry, that the dining-room smelt honest. Grivet, not to be in the back-ground, had named

it the Temple of Peace. Two or three times during the latter days Thérèse had explained away the marks of blows which discoloured her face by telling their guests that she had had a fall. None of them moreover would have dreamt these marks were made by Laurent's fist; they were convinced that their hosts' was a model household, all love and gentleness.

The paralytic had never again attempted to reveal to them the infamy concealed behind the dull quietude of the Thursday evenings. Feeling, at sight of the murderers' sufferings, that a crisis was imminent, hurried on by the fatal succession of events, she came to the conclusion that the sequel would work itself out without her interference. She therefore remained passive, waiting for the consequences of her son's murder to involve the death of the murderers. She merely prayed to Heaven to grant her sufficient life to be present at the violent catastrophe impending; her last wish was to feast her eyes on the spectacle of Laurent's and Thérèse's death agonies.

On this evening, Grivet came and sat by her for a long time chatting, and, as usual, asking questions and answering them. But he could not even succeed in gaining her eye. When the clock chimed half-past eleven, the guests rose quickly.

"We are so comfortable here," said Grivet, "that we forget to go."

"The fact is," added Michaud, "I'm never sleepy here, though my usual hour is nine o'clock."

Olivier thought he ought to add his little joke.

"You see," he said, showing his yellow teeth, "there's always an odour of honesty here: that's why one's so much at one's ease."

Grivet, vexed at having been out-done, began to declaim, with an emphasising gesture:

“This room is the Temple of Peace.”

Meanwhile Suzanne was tying her bonnet strings, and saying to Thérèse :

“I will come to-morrow morning, at nine o'clock.”

“No,” replied the young woman hurriedly, “don't come before the afternoon. I shall probably be out in the morning.”

She spoke with a strange, troubled voice. She accompanied the guests to the Passage. Laurent went down also, holding the lamp. When they were alone, the husband and wife both heaved a sigh of relief ; a blind impatience must have been devouring them all the evening. Since the preceding day, they had been more gloomy and uneasy when together. They avoided each other's gaze, and went up silently. Their hands trembled convulsively, and Laurent was obliged to place the lamp on the table, for fear of dropping it.

Before putting Madame Raquin to bed, they generally tidied the dining-room, and prepared some sugar and water for the night, thus hovering about the paralytic till all was finished.

When they had come upstairs, on this occasion, they seated themselves for a moment, with pale lips and uncertain glance. After a short silence, Laurent asked as if waking from a reverie :

“Well ! aren't we going to bed ?”

“Yes, yes, we're going to bed,” replied Thérèse, shivering, as if she felt bitter cold.

She rose and took the water-bottle.

“Never mind that,” called her husband, with a voice which he strove to make natural, “I will prepare the sugar and water. You can attend to your aunt.”

He took the bottle from his wife's hands, and filled a glass with water ; then, turning half round, he emptied the little



THERÈSE AND LAURENT BENT UPON TAKING EACH OTHER'S LIFE.

stone phial into the glass, at the same time adding a lump of sugar.

Meanwhile, Thérèse was squatting down at the sideboard ; she had taken the large cook's knife from its hiding place, and was trying to conceal it in one of the large pockets, hanging from her waist-band.

At this moment, that strange sensation which warns of approaching danger made the husband and wife turn their heads instinctively. They looked at each other. Thérèse saw the phial in Laurent's hand, and Laurent saw the flash of the steel knife in the folds of Thérèse's skirt. They examined each other thus for some seconds, cold and silent, the husband near the table, the wife bending before the sideboard. They understood. Each remained petrified at finding the same thought in the other. Mutually reading their secret design in their disturbed looks, they were overwhelmed with pity and horror.

Madame Raquin, feeling the crisis at hand, fixed upon them a piercing and steady gaze.

Thérèse and Laurent suddenly broke into sobs. Wrought up to the highest pitch of agony, they threw themselves into each other's arms, weak as children. Some lingering spark of softness and tenderness seemed to wake up in their breast. They wept silently, thinking of the shameless life they had led; and would go on leading, if they were cowards enough to live. Then, at the remembrance of the past, they felt so weary and disgusted with themselves, that they had an immense craving for rest, for annihilation. They exchanged a last look, a look of gratitude, for the knife and the glass of poison. Thérèse took the glass, drank half the contents and handed it to Laurent who finished it in one draught. The effects were like lightning. They fell down, one on the other, annihilated, finding at last consolation in death. The wife's mouth fell on her

husband's neck, and rested on the scar left by Camille's teeth.

The corpses remained all night on the dining-room floor twisted, sprawling, lighted by yellow rays which the shade of the lamp shed upon them. And for nearly twelve hours, until near noon the following day, Madame Raquin, silent and motionless, watched them at her feet, unable to satisfy her eyes, crushing them beneath her heavy gaze.

THE END.



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